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BRADFORD COX OF ATLAS SOUND, PHOTOGRAPHED IN NYC BY JOSH McNEY



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Ed's Rant: Truth Be Told



Four tequila shots later, Vivian tries on all the crap she bought at the El Chopo punk market in Mexico City.

Last year at this time, we presaged the return of rave with a Klaxons cover designed by Paper Rad. A year later, the crystal ball is a little cloudier—that is to say, there's not a nascent scene staring us in the face with its glittering, blood-shot eyeballs. But if the artists in this issue are any indication, there appears to be some sort of emotional trend coalescing for 2008—call it a return to honesty.

First, we snag an interview with Jamie Stewart, the backbone of Kill Rock Stars band Xiu Xiu, and the man behind the group's incendiary, highly personal lyrics about the most fucked-up of family issues. On the occasion of the Oakland group's new album, *Women as Lovers*, managing editor Ken Taylor high-tailed it across the Bay Bridge for a few cups of tea with Stewart, and things (perhaps unsurprisingly) got confessional.

Equally startling is Deerhunter frontman Bradford Cox, who delves into a more ambient, androgynous headspace with his solo project Atlas Sound. Writer Joe Colly met up with the Atlanta-based Cox in New York and discovered how his childhood as an outsider has given him such an incredibly inclusive sound.

Unlike Stewart and Cox, we don't think the young members of rap group The Pack have ever gotten head on stage, though they are *definitely* into boppers (you'll have to check page 56 to find out what that means). They're also pushing the urban punk rock

thing—meaning that while the rest of the rap scene concentrates on drug moves and gun play, this barely-out-of-high-school quartet holds it down for the ghetto kids who prefer skate decks and Vans to hoopies and Tims.

It's easy to look to London, Tokyo, and New York for what's next, but we go further afield this time, meeting Stones Throw's newest heavy-hitter James Pants in Spokane, Washington, the next wave of techno fiends in Mexico City, a pair of clever collage artists from Vancouver, and two stupidly fresh hip-hop artists from Scotland and Ireland, respectively. World traveler Sarah Bentley issues a missive from Jamaica, where she met up with Kingston-based badman Munga Honourable, while photographer Jeremy Liebman snapped portraits of six Brooklyn acts whose multi-layered next-level sounds are anything but predictable.

While there's few sonic links between the artists here, they've all got one thing in common—they ain't scared. Whether it's house stalwart Jay Haze deciding to sing over his own R&B tracks or Dutch jumpstyle producers discarding good taste while firing up the dancefloor, one could learn a lot here about doing what's real and what feels right. And that's the truth.

- Vivian Host, Editor
XLR8R

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Xiu Xiu's Jamie Stewart, photographed in Oakland by Mathew Scott.

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Josh McNey
Photographer Josh McNey lives and works in New York City. Raised in Southern California, McNey spent seven years in the U.S. Marines before leaving to pursue his passion for photography. He recently completed assignments for *Tokion* and *OUT*, and is currently preparing an exhibition of his work documenting the world of college wrestling. For this month's Atlas Sound feature, McNey shot Bradford Cox in New York. This is his first assignment for *XLR8R*.
joshmcney.blogspot.com



Masayo Kishi
Japanese-born, New York-based stylist Masayo Kishi loves collaboration. While her unique use of color makes her subjects pop off the page, she's equally quick to sing the praises of her counterparts behind the lens and make-up palette; "I wouldn't be able to finish my work by myself," she states. She has styled for Shiseido, Akademiks, and Loomstate, art-directed Honda ads, and dressed the likes of Rihanna and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O. Masayo styled this month's style shoot.
www.masayokishi.com



Audrey Kell
XLR8R junior designer and production manager Audrey Kell keeps our visual game tight, working her secret Photoshop magic in ways our readers would never realize. Born and raised in the East Bay, Audrey moved to Orange County for college but returned to the Bay a year and a half later to study motion graphics instead. She currently enjoys cocktails, cooking, camping, swimming, hanging out with her dog Sunshine, and supporting Ron Paul's presidential run.



Gonzalo Morales Pasantes
More than 20 years ago, Gonzalo Morales, a frustrated, self-taught drummer, turned his attention to photography and hasn't looked back since. After living in Paris, New York, and Miami (where he was MTV Latino's first VJ), he moved back to Mexico City and now shoots ad campaigns and magazine editorial, including this month's MUTEK MX spread. He currently lives with his girlfriend and three dogs, and is preparing a book of his music-related photographs.

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Letters to the Editor

Got something to say? Love us? Hate us? Write us at letterbox@xlr8r.com or send mail to XLR8R Magazine, 1388 Haight Street #105, San Francisco, CA 94117.



November Issue #112



December Issue #113

Props Circle

Hey Guys and Gal,
Just wanted to give you guys SUPER props on the newly improved mag. HOT! The style, content, and layout, right down to the quality of the paper is superb. That's it—just wanted to say mazel tov :)

joeB, King Street Sounds/Nite
Grooves, via the web

Baby Got Back (Issues)

XLR8R,
I was wondering if there is anyway I can still purchase a copy of Issue #111, "Paris, Je T'aime." I checked several bookstores and only the November issue is in. Could I please purchase a copy from you directly? Thanks.

Best,
Daniel Olavarria, via the web

Jennifer responds: You can purchase most back issues by writing to subscribe@xlr8r.com. All back issues are also available for free PDF download at XLR8R.com/magazine.

Fits of Furie

Hey XLR8R,
Just wanted to drop a line about Matt Furie and thank you for including his awesome doodles ["Vis-Ed," December #113]. His stuff is so surreal, hilarious, and visually pleasing. This guy deserves to be the next Dali. Or something along those lines. Anyways, cool shit!
Billy C., via the web

Digging It

Your piece on Super Furry

Vivian responds: Please understand that the year-end best-of lists are a compilation of hundreds of different industry peoples' comments, not just the XLR8R staff. Oh yeah, and Amy Winehouse is overrated.

"Best" Regards

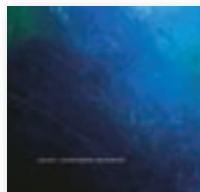
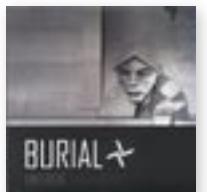
Sometimes you guys have

the strangest take on things, I gotta say. In your year-end list ["Best of 2007," December #113], you listed LCD Soundsystem as the best artist? Plus R. Kelly and Lil' Wayne? And then you go on to say that Amy Winehouse is the worst? Y'all need to get your shit straight.

James Pace, via the web



Writer Doug Morton's son Jackson.



XLR8R's "Digital Love" Contest

Win the new year's hottest hits in a contest brought to you by AT&T.

It's no secret that XLR8R has got much love for the digital world. Besides all our favorite artists tapping out their symphonies on laptops, and even those addicted to analog fuzz and acoustic strum now mixing on Pro Tools, we ourselves wouldn't be able to do what we do without the aid of digital technology.

We've teamed up with a slew of our favorite labels to bring you the best in underground music from the digital realm. Here's your chance to snag

copies of **Burial's** *Untrue* (Hyperdub), **Pinch's** *Underwater Dancehall* (Tectonic), **Disrupt's** *Foundation Bit* (Kranky), **Naked Acid's** *Valet's* *Naked Acid* (Kranky), and **Xiu Xiu's** *A Number of Small Things* (Morr Music), **Yeasayer's** *All Hour Cymbals* (We Are Free), **Grupo Obabila's** *Drums of Cuba* (Soul Jazz), **Hot Chip's** *Made in the Dark* and the promo-only *Remixes and Rarities* disc (Astralwerks), **Lopazz's** *Kook Kook* (Get Physical), **James Pants' Welcome** (Stones Throw), **Kon & Amir's** *Off Track Vol. One* (BBE), **Atlas Sound's**

Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See But Cannot Feel (Kranky), **Valet's** *Naked Acid* (Kranky), and **Xiu Xiu's** *The Air Force* (5RC) and **Women as Lovers** (Kill Rock Stars).

All you've got to do is answer the following question in 100 words or less: [What can AT&T do for your digital world?](#)

The most interesting entry will receive a copy of each CD listed above.

Entries will be accepted via standard mail and email. Entries must be received by March 22, 2008. Send your entry to XLR8R's "Digital Love Contest," 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email contest@xlr8r.com with "XLR8R's Digital Love Contest" in the subject line.

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Boy 8-Bit

South London's game boy schools us on Commodore 64 club bangers.

Though his alias suggests otherwise, David Morris, who goes by the name Boy 8-Bit, didn't grow up with a videogame console in his home. "My parents wouldn't let me [have one]," he says. "They wanted me to have a computer as it was more 'educational.'"

As a result, his first actual contact with 8-bit technology came not through Nintendo but early home computers like the Spectrum and Commodore 64. Whether intended for instruction or play, those initial dealings with technology clearly struck a chord. Morris possesses a seemingly meticulous knowledge of computers. And as Boy 8-Bit, he punishes processors to create a head-spinning brand of electro- and breakbeat-infused future house.

Morris, now 27, started DJing and making electronic music around the age of 15, employing a Commodore Amiga 500 and Octamed tracker software (an early sample-based program). He could create only simple tracks with such humble tools, but a few years later he'd find inspiration in a new piece of equipment. In 1999, Morris was making tunes on a PC using Cubase software—and not having much luck—until a friend gave him a copy of Fruity Loops. "I use it to this day for everything," he says. "It's awesome."

With a newfound confidence to match his new set-up, Morris has been making certifiable bangers and garnering praise for remixes of Black Ghosts (Simian's Simon Lord and DJ Touché), dubstep don Burial, and East London rapper Lethal Bizzle. "Any Way You Choose to Give It," a reworking of a track by the former, "has been the one that really kicked everything off," Morris explains. And though that song's almost a year old now, Morris tells us he "still [gets] MySpace messages from people asking where they can get a copy."

His productions are chock-full of ideas—lots of bass and breakbeats culled from hip-hop, jungle, and big beat, as well as plenty of chopped-up and screwed vocals—edited cleanly into a composed, wholly danceable thump that owes as much to Baltimore and late-'90s hip-hop as it does the British rave scene. "I like bass, I like melody, and I like dynamics," he offers. "I'm just throwing things [together] to see what comes out."

Boy 8-Bit EPs are forthcoming this year on Mad Decent and Trouble & Bass. www.myspace.com/boy8bit

Clothes Captioned: Freshjive

A Cali streetwear legend selects special propaganda from their spring collection.

Back in the day, you couldn't set foot in a rave without spying a citrus-colored **Freshjive** shirt (probably a take-off on the Tide or Fruit of the Loom logos), or a copy thereof. Subterfuge and social commentary is *still* the name of the game for this

Los Angeles brand, whose spring 2008 collection alone contains riffs on Afrocentric '90s hip-hop, cholo culture, and Middle East politics—plus plenty of their now-infamous logo parodies, from a re-release of the aforementioned Tide rip-

off to versions of the Pop Will Eat Itself and Oakland Raiders icons. Rhyming and stealing hasn't always been easy (a recent lawsuit from Stüssy comes to mind) but that hasn't stopped founder Rick Klotz from pushing the envelope,

or the growth of the Freshjive enterprise, which now includes the SoCal surf-inspired Gonz clothing line, a store (Reserve LA, on Fairfax Avenue in Hollywood), and the publication of an annual collector's mag, *The Propagandist*, which is an

outlet for Klotz's photography and inspirations. Here are some special selections from the company's spring line. (All items available at www.reservela.net.) Vivian Host www.freshjive.com



Breed hat (\$40)

The Breed New Era cap, inspired by the classic 1991 MC Breed video for "Ain't No Future In Yo' Frontin'."



Punks t-shirt (\$36)

Inspired by the legendary Brand Nubian and their hit single "Punks Jump Up."



Stand or Fall t-shirt (\$28)

From a famous, very poignant quote by Malcolm X.



Resurgent varsity jacket (\$290)

This varsity-style jacket's got a heavy wool body with white leather sleeves, plus a quilted and printed satin liner and hood. Check the O.G. Freshjive logo patch on the chest and back!



1989 zip-hoodie (\$88)

This one's athletic-influenced, with an Olympic theme. Freshjive 1989 refers to the year that Freshjive was created.

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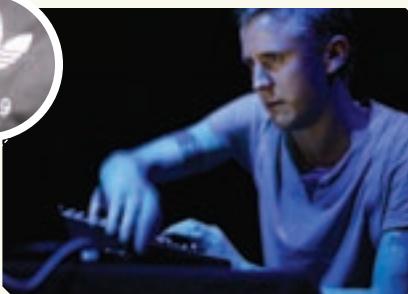
Words **Vivian Host**
Photos **Gonzalo Morales Pasantes**
& **Vivian Host**

Live Wire: Mutek MX

The Montreal festival's Mexican offshoot explores the many moods of techno.



Kode9 & The SpaceApe



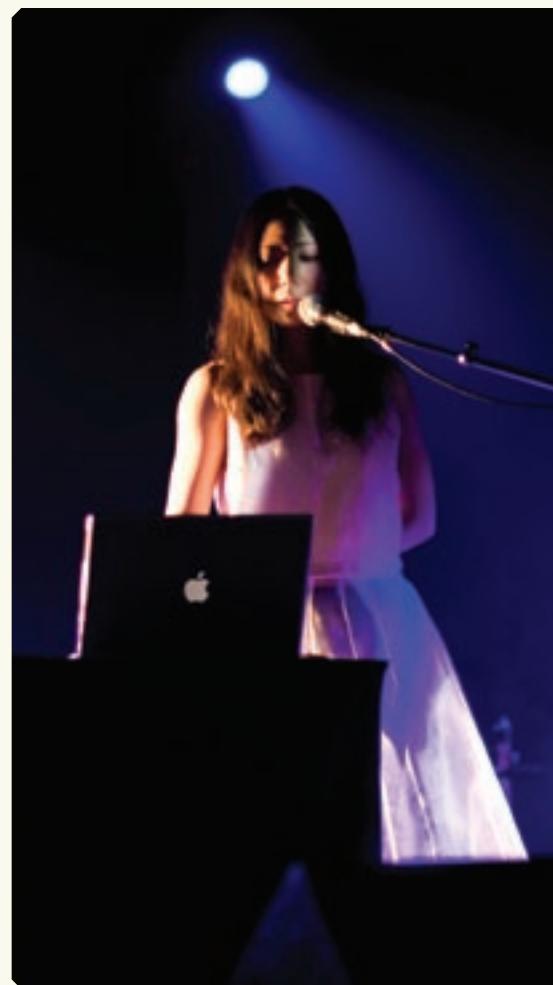
Vladislav Delay



A Mexico City cab



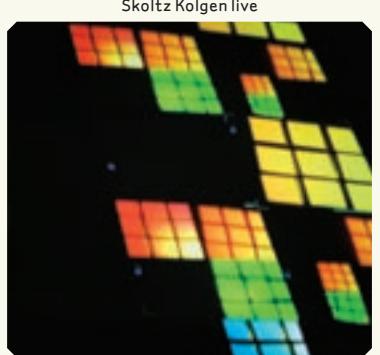
Metrika, Andres Almeida & Karen Ruiz



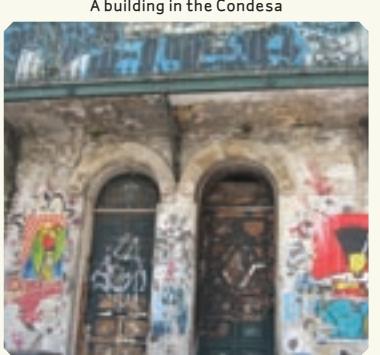
Tujiko Noriko



Festival goers



Skoltz Kolgen live



A building in the Condesa



Halloween gear at Mercado Sonora



Circlesquare



The pyramids at Teotihuacan



Ryoji Ikeda



Antiguo Autómata Mexicano



Teatro Fru Fru

While the tiny, dark streets of Mexico City's historic center were still throbbing from the day's usual chaos, the inner sanctum of the Teatro Fru Fru was as silent as a library. Surrounded by gilded balconies of a bygone era, Japan's Tujiko Noriko—her ghostly frame awash in blue light—played quiet, haunted paeans to the digital age from her laptop.

Noriko was one of many acts at **Mutek MX** (October 8-13)—the Mexico City offshoot of Montreal's long-running annual digital-art enterprise—whose sound starkly contrasted the metropolis' musical palette, which is a bright, frenzied mosh of mariachi bands, retro punks, and booming blog-house parties seemingly imported from Los Angeles.

By turns, Mutek MX music was precision-crafted, cerebral, and often angular, even when it was dancefloor-friendly.

Nonetheless, techno's palette left room for many moods to be conveyed.

Vancouver's Circlesquare presented riveting gothic IDM for the post-rave set, replete with ketamine-slowed home videos of hardcore

shows and house-party fights. The festival's strong visual-art component was highlighted by breathtaking performances from Tijuana's Static Discos, turned up in both his experimental-bleep guise as Mecsa Droid and as half of Duopandamix, whose clever set made electro-breaks sound new again. Monterrey's Antiguo Autómata Mexicano delivered noisy Krautrock-influenced grooves with a live drummer, while cutesy, Postal

Perhaps unsurprisingly,

Mexican artists on the bill showed the most range. Local resident Gabriel Acevedo, who records for Tijuana's Static Discos, turned up in both his experimental-bleep guise as Mecsa Droid and as half of Duopandamix, whose clever set made electro-breaks sound new again. Monterrey's Antiguo Autómata Mexicano delivered noisy Krautrock-influenced grooves with a live drummer, while cutesy, Postal

Service-esque dance pop was on tap from Songs for Eleonor, fronted by local techno producer and film actor Andres Almeida (pictured in front of the sweet Discoteca record store with Eleonor singer Karen Ruiz and Crosstown Rebels' Metrika).

Long nights of blips and bleeps made daylight sightseeing hours seem even more precious. A trip to Mercado Sonora ("The Witches' Market") with Schneider

TM turned up an assortment

of Santeria paraphernalia, Halloween masks, a disturbing array of exotic animals crammed in cages, and delicious squash-blossom quesadillas. A visit to the city's magnificent museums and the pyramids at Teotihuacan was mandatory... and even more so was repairing to the cantina for ceviche with hot sauce and glass after glass of homemade mezcal. *Adios brain!* Vivian Host



For more from Mexico City, visit XLR8R.com/114extras.



Words Robbie Mackey

YEASAYER, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: IRA WOLF TUTON, ANAND WILDER, CHRIS KEATING, LUKE FASANO

Yeasayer

One man's apocalypse is another man's guitar-rock dance party.

The world is about to end.

But at the moment the apocalypse hardly ranks on Anand Wilder's list of concerns. The Yeasayer guitarist has been touring Europe for two weeks now, which means 14 days of dropping eight bucks a pop on Whopper Juniors. *Eight bucks*. A price so steep that the exchange rate will do him in just fine if the A-bomb doesn't.

"Seriously, this English tour is killing us, man," Wilder laughs, wrapping up a soundcheck at The Catch Bar in London. "The fucking pound..."

His lighthearted candor comes as a bit of a surprise considering Yeasayer's debut, *All Hour Cymbals*, is an obtuse set, as comfortable trading in Eastern-tinged psych-pop or hippie-fied Krautrock as it is in gnarled gospel and sample-laden indie rock. The one unifier is a blanket of anxiety and fear of the future. So when Wilder goes from bemoaning the pound to recounting a night of drinking games with Welsh

frat boys, I'm even more shocked.

But why? The idea of diversion from despair—à la the squalor-obscuring veil of Bollywood cinema, or the toothy celebration of Zimbabwean guitarist Thomas Mapfumo—is central to the Yeasayer universe, both in substance and sound. It's fitting then, that our 45-minute chat runs the gamut from serious to silly to mundane—from discussing waxy English produce and fantastic breakfasts, to the best books about global warming and the band's seeming preoccupation with the end of the world.

"There's this sense of extreme emotions, and extreme ups and extreme downs [in our music]," says Wilder. "We're not just trying to replicate our boring suburban, middle-class lives, you know? We're trying to escape into something. We've always had a sense for melodrama."

Much like Wilder, *Cymbals* is at once concerned with rejoicing and The End, reality and escaping from it. In

less capable hands, this could have been a blatant pop album, or one long cautionary tale. But it's both and neither, chafing in wonderful ways and turning a looming apocalypse into an all-hours dance party.

"It's funny that people have been focusing on our lyrics so much," says Wilder. "We don't really consider ourselves lyricists or poets or anything like that. We've always been more concerned with the hook, with making it memorable. But if you can sneak a few subversive lyrics in there, then so much the better."

Wilder's modesty undersells the vitality and importance of Yeasayer's message: that we might as well dance until our time's up, or, as he puts it, "face disaster with a positive outlook."

Yeasayer's *All Hour Cymbals* is out now on We Are Free. www.yeasayer.net



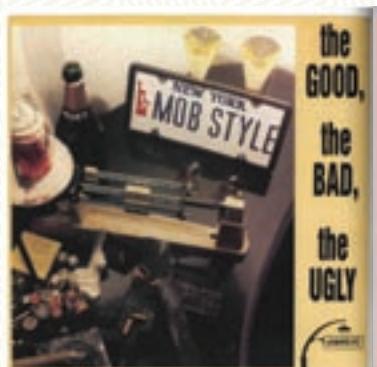
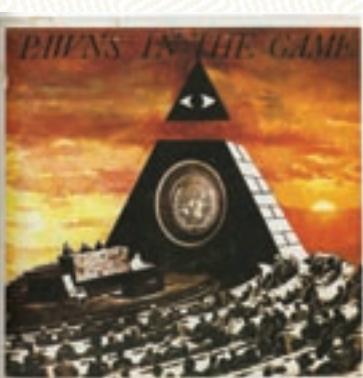
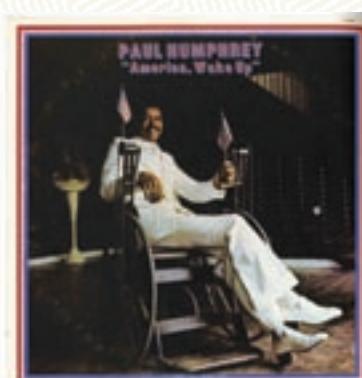
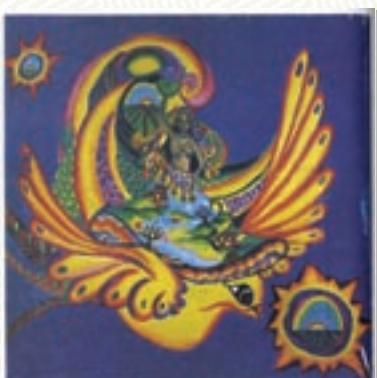
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Wax On

A chronicler of rare grooves and vinyl fetishism expands its empire.

Since its inception in 2001, the bi-monthly *Wax Poetics* magazine has become a bible for seekers of rarefied grooves, message-laden hip-hop, and ephemera from bygone soul and funk eras. It is to publishing what Soul Jazz is to the crate-digging community—not just a distiller of the finest lost sounds in funk, reggae,

and jazz but a griot-like teller of their histories.

Last year, with the help of Amir Abdullah (of Kon and Amir fame), the magazine expanded to include a label of the same name, on which they released their debut compilation, *East of Underground*, a recording borne of a battle of the bands on a U.S. Army base in Germany

in 1971. "We're following that up with a rare 45 titled 'Baby I Want You' b/w 'Pray for Me,'" the Mizell Brothers' first release as The Moments," informs *Wax Poetics* editor and vinyl enthusiast Andre Torres. While an MP3 download site of hard-to-find tunes is on its way, Torres' latest obsession is a pair of books that the magazine

will release in association with Puma. "Make Checks Payable to Charles Mingus," a tale of the legendary bassist's failed mail-order "record club," is just one of many intensely researched and beautifully photographed stories recounted in *Wax Poetics Anthology Volume 1* (hardcover; \$39.95). But to really wax nostalgic, check out

Wax Poetics Anthology Volume 1 and *Cover Story* (softcover; \$19.95), a less content-heavy survey of funk, soul, hip-hop, house, and disco's sexy, strange, beautiful, and hilarious sleeve art.

Ken Taylor

Wax Poetics Anthology Volume 1 and *Cover Story* are out this spring on Wax Poetics/powerHouse Books. www.waxpoeticsbooks.com



COOKIN' UP HISTORY – AGAIN.

Grandmaster Flash is not just the Creator of the Quik Mix Theory – he's a Scientist. From his groundbreaking appearance in *Wildstyle* cutting, rubbing and mixing in the kitchen to his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Flash demands the best from himself and his gear.

Over the last 25 years, Flash has evolved as a DJ and Producer, and naturally so has his DJ setup. In anticipation, he waited for a digital vinyl system that could deliver the purest analog feel while giving him new tools to take his technique into the future.

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HERALDS OF CHANGE, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: HUDSON MOHAWKE AND MIKE SLOTT

Heralds of Change

A Gaelic beat connection finds love on the internet.

Mike Slott and Hudson Mohawke of Heralds of Change hail from Dublin, Ireland, and Glasgow,

Scotland, respectively, but geography is an irrelevant ingredient in the pair's surreal hip-hop stew. Since linking in Scotland in 2005 (Slott lived there at the time but returned to Ireland soon after), Slott and Mohawke—whose hometowns aren't exactly hip-hop hotbeds—have built their beats together over the 'net. And while the Heralds' left-of-field tracks are often instrumental, the verses on the four EPs they've released through Dublin's All City label are delivered by undiscovered U.S. rappers like Unknown and Trek Life.

"It's fucked up, but the only way I really know is the digital way," says the 21-year-old Mohawke (a.k.a.

Ross Birchard, a DMC finalist at age 15) during our Instant Messenger interview. "I've never really been a big collaborator with people locally. It's only in the last six months that people in Glasgow actually know what I do."

But with internet-music overload leading even open-

minded listeners to segregate their tastes along genre lines, how have two previously unknown lads plying a sound with no name been able to gain such traction? Dutch label Rush Hour helped. With last year's *Beat Dimensions Vol. 1* compilation, the label revealed an international community of inventive instrumental hip-hop producers with a love for disjointed Dilla beats and beautifully broken-down sounds. Heralds of Change did not appear on the disc, but Mohawke's solo contribution, "Trace," was one of its most praised tracks.

"A lot of us have been locked up for years making shit with no real idea what it is [or] where it belongs," Mohawke says of the producer community spotlighted on the comp. "[*Beat Dimensions*] made it official.

Because it's now quantified as a 'scene,' people are less wary of booking the shit, so it allowed us to spend the latter half of 2007 traveling 'round, giving people the full-on assault in the club."

Fresh off their latest and most revelatory EP release,

Secrets—"Bop Gunn," featuring occasional HOC stage frontman Oliver-Day Soul, is a funkadelic freak-out worthy of OutKast—Slott and Mohawke are currently wrapping up their debut LP due out in February. The as-yet-untitled collection will split equally between instrumentals and collaborations with Steve Spacek, Oddisee, and Jneiro Jarel, among others.

"We're continuing what we've been doing with the 12-inches," Slott says, "to make the music that we would like to hear and collaborate with people we would ideally like to have on our records."

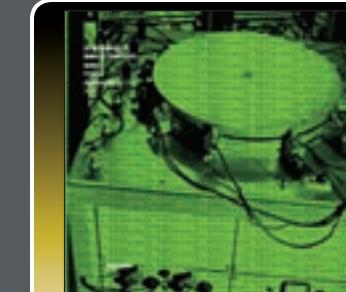
Heralds of Change's *Secrets* EP is out now on All City Records. Their full-length debut arrives in February.

www.all-cityrecords.com,
www.myspace.com/heraldsofchange



JOAQUIN "JOE" CLAUßELL
Un.Chained Rhythms Pt. I CD
Un.Chained Rhythms Pt. II CD

After a decade-long hiatus without releasing a full length, legendary NYC house producer, DJ and label-head Joe Claußell drops two individual album releases. Containing several cuts from 2005's *Un.chained Rhythms 12"* series bolstered with new tracks, file this under "Cosmic House Music."



VARIOUS ARTISTS
An Anthology of Noise and Electronic Music Volume 5 2CD

5th volume of this proposed 7-volume series, and one of the crown jewels in Sub Rosa's amazing catalog. 2CD deluxe digipack with 54-page book and rare and unreleased tracks by Gil Wolman, Mauricio Kagel, Richard Maxfield, Pere Ubu, Charlemagne Palestine and others.



TRIPLE R
Selection 6 CD

Mixed flawlessly by label co-owner Riley Reinhold, this sixth release in Trapez's *Selection* series includes cuts from Bülent Gürler, SLG, Alex Under and more. "...the pumping pulse never wanes, transitions are elegantly subtle, and the individual pieces never lose their original identity despite the seamless flow Reinhold produces between them." —Textura



ROD MODELL
Incense & Black Light CD

Detroit's Rod Modell, better known as Echospace (with Steve Hitchell) and DeepChord, continues his extrapolation of the Basic Channel sound with *Incense & Black Light*. Psychedelic dub, sub-bass and slabs of alien atmosphere rule here. Ideal 3:00 AM headphone listening.



GAVIN BRYARS *The Sinking of the Titanic (1969-)* CD

This new interpretation of Bryars' seminal piece captures the devastation and sadness of the Titanic tragedy better than any since its composition in 1969. Bryars was joined by Italian multi-instrumental group Alter Ego and Philip Jeck for this landmark performance, which was recorded live in Venice in 2005.



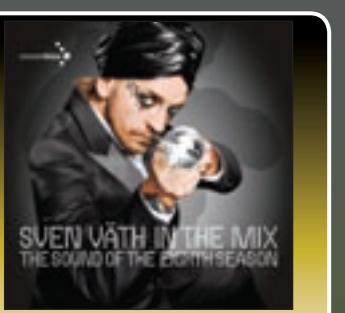
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Achtung! German Grooves: 20 Instrumental Dancefloor Killers from the 60s and 70s CD

Twenty instrumental dancefloor killers from Deutschland. James Last, Peter Thomas Sound Orchestra and Kai Warner And His Orchestra are among those whose slick funk gems and sleazy soul beats make this compilation of unearthed classics another triumph for Bureau B.



DOMINIK EULBERG
Bionik CD/2LP

Third full-length release from this Bonn-based DJ, producer and park ranger. "Say what you will about Eulberg's methods, or even his grasp on reality, but the man knows how to work a groove. Passion and talent are generally a formidable combination, and Eulberg has both in spades." —Stylus



SVEN VÄTH *In The Mix: The Sound of the Eighth Season* 2CD

Sad you aren't a part of Cocoon Club's annual summertime Ibiza parties? Here's a chance to relive those legendary nights with a mix of tracks culled from Väth's epic live sets this past season. Artists include Joris Voorn, Junior Boys, Argy, Martin Buttrich and more. "Cocoon and Sven never disappoint!" —Almostcool.com



JUSTUS KÖHNCKE
Safe and Sound CD

Precisely two years after the wondrous *Doppel Leben*, Kompakt's future legend Justus Köhncke returns with *Safe and Sound*, 10 tracks of pure disco bangers tempered with numbers bruised with enigmatic melancholy. Certain to hit you like a vitamin injection; once again this is something big, something new!



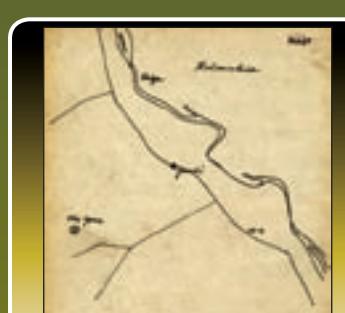
PRINCIPLES OF GEOMETRY
Lazare CD

These two Frenchmen dig vintage analog synths, NASA videos, the woods and moustaches. If that's not enough of a reference, think about two decades of electronic music, from Terry Riley to Aphex Twin, synthesized into an album that is as emotional as it is unique.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
A Number Of Small Things 2CD

Compiling tracks from the 7" series of the same name, this 2CD set features label stalwarts like B. Fleischmann and ISAN, along with promising newcomers Benni Hemm Hemm and Seabear, among many, many others. Lovely in the way you've come to expect from Morr.



Angel is Ilpo Väistö (Pan Sonic), Hildur Guðnadóttir (Lost in Hilderness) and Dirk Dresselhaus (Schneider TM). *Kalmukia* is a vast epic, sprawling through guitar riffs and spanning deep electronic canyons shrouded by a melancholic grey sky. A journey leading to discovery and a final mutation.

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What Is It? **Jumpstyle**

The YouTube-friendly Belgian dance craze that's spreading like wildfire.

Dutch gabber's nosebleed drum blur was never supposed to be subtle, but the genre's latest offshoot, **jumpstyle**, sure makes it seem that way. Taking cues from the cheesiest moments of rave's 15-plus years, jumpstyle mixes Euro-trance's marching melodies with gabber's bouncy kick drums, then adds liberal doses of stolen rave hooks and time-honored dancefloor gimmickry. At best, this ecstatic clobber is a guilty pleasure; at worst, it's a barely updated soundtrack for the rushing pill head.

"Otto Von Schirach played jumpstyle for me, and I thought it was some of the shittiest techno I've ever heard," says Dan Doormouse, owner of Addict Records and self-proclaimed "godfather" of Midwest hardcore. His short version of the sound? "Imagine a million racquet balls bouncing in sync, running through a distortion pedal. Add some cheap electronic claps and snare drums, the worst-possible synth

from an '80s song, and a European dude talking about drug use in second-rate English."

Doormouse's reaction is typical of American post-ravers introduced to jumpstyle via YouTube, which boasts a growing collection of Dutch "jumping" videos. Resembling the classic Russian Cossack squat-and-kick dance, jumping's one-legged twist is an integral part of the scene's identity; crews such as Jumpforce are even advertised on party flyers, and many have adopted the "jump is not a crime" mantra to combat jumpstyle bans at dancehalls.

"Some people say the jumpstyle dance moves come from the Melbourne Shuffle, or from France," says DJ Coone (a.k.a. Koen Bauweraerts), one of the scene's leading producers and DJs. "But most people believe the origin lies in Belgium, where the music first caught hold. [With YouTube], people watch each other's moves and try to improve or invent their own, a bit

like breakdancing."

Although the music and dancing might seem ridiculous to American eyes, jumpstyle is still a quick-growing European phenomenon. The yearly Reverze party in Antwerp draws in upwards of 18,000 people, with a lineup that represents jumpstyle's biggest acts: Dark-E, DJ Coone, Greg C, and Ruthless, to name a few. Then there's the club night at Complex, just outside Antwerp, which packs in 2,000 people every Saturday night.

"Jumpstyle has become a lifestyle, like hip-hop or techno," says DJ Coone. "For me, it's the best party music around. There's no other style that makes you go so crazy and forget about all your worries."

Head to XLR8R.com/114extras to download this artwork as wallpaper.



Words **Jesse Serwer**
Photos **Darcy Caputo**

James Pants

Stones Throw's newest one-man band contorts himself, Spokane-style.

Future Shock-era Herbie Hancock, L.A. electro, New Age-y French disco, and Paradise Garage love-funkists Skyy may inform the tracks on *Welcome*, the debut LP by James Pants, but while the record borrows from these and other roller-rink-friendly '80s grooves, it's no jukebox-style revue. Instead, the wildly divergent but coherent LP tells the tale of a lone music obsessive from the very un-funky town of Spokane, Washington.

"I have a bunch of thrift-store gear, and I like to turn on some red lights and just make some sounds," says the 25-year-old Pants—a.k.a. James Singleton—when pressed to describe his growing oeuvre. "I guess it's just the sound of really cheap equipment, listening to a lot of records, and goofing off."

Tracks like the '80s-electro-indebted "Cosmic Rapp" and his cover of Skyy's '82 single "Let's Celebrate" are derived from very specific reference points, but, in Pants' hands, they take on identities all their own.

"I get so excited about certain records that I basically live vicariously through them and I'll try to record

a song just like that," says Pants, who plays keys, drums, and guitar and sings on most of *Welcome*'s tracks. "But because I don't have the musical ability or the right sound, [I] kinda end up with [my] own thing."

Pants credits Spokane—a sprawling but sleepy city of 200,000 in eastern Washington—for his unique window on a musical epoch he's not old enough to remember. "Being kind of an impoverished town, there's always great stuff turning up in thrift stores and pawn shops here," he says, citing the circa '83 Roland JX-3P synthesizer featured on *Welcome*. Another key score was *The Chocolate Star* EP, a rare 1982 release by eccentric Camden, NJ groove-master Gary Davis (a.k.a. "The Professor"), who makes a cameo appearance on *Welcome*. "I like to buy really regional-looking records and I just happened to buy that one—I knew nothing about *Chocolate Star* [which has since been reissued through Boston's Traffic Entertainment], but it blew my mind. I switched my game up."

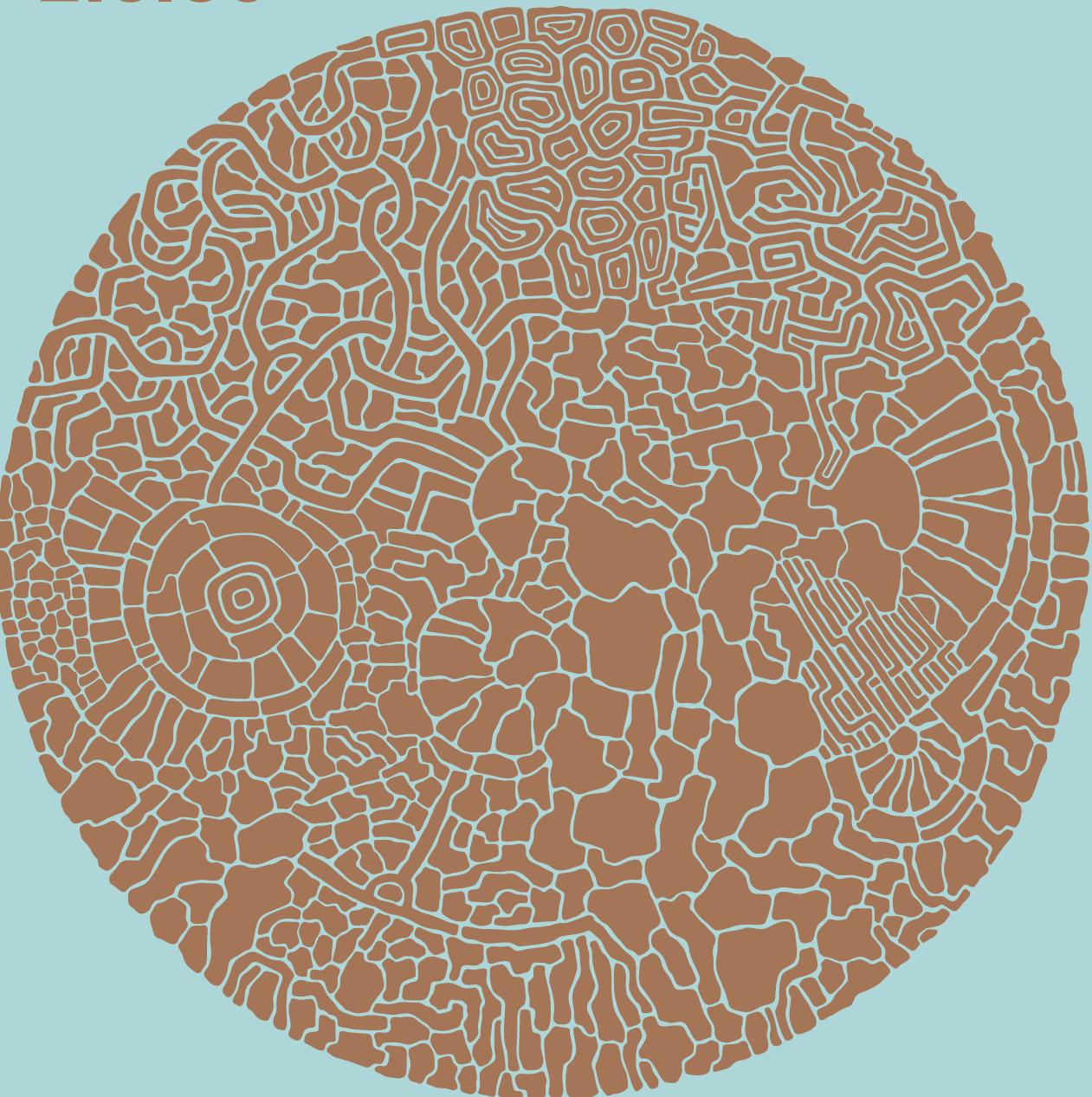
While Pants' take on '80s boogie—also influenced by no-waver James Chance, from whom he aped the

name—is generally less accessible and more offbeat than that of similarly minded Stones Throw recruit Dam-Funk, a handful of tracks like "KA\$H" (released last year as a limited-edition 12-inch) and "Crystal Lite" are definite dancefloor detonators. The former, a collaboration with Austin, TX vocalist Deon Davis (who also sings on "Crystal Lite"), highlights another key ingredient in the James Pants equation: humor. The hilariously offbeat *Monty Python*-meets-East L.A. video for "Do a Couple of Things" (from Stones Throw's *Chrome Children* compilation) makes an ideal introduction to Pants' off-kilter world.

"I take this music seriously but humor is the way I like to get ideas across," Pants says. "Because who's going to take some white kid from Spokane doing '80s boogie seriously?"

Welcome is out this spring on Stones Throw
www.stonesthrow.com/jamespants

HOT CHIP MADE IN THE DARK OUT 2.5.08



Hot Chip's third full length release and the follow up to their critically acclaimed album *The Warning*. This is Hot Chip at its best; wonderfully quirky, clever, soulful and poppy.

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Spin Cycle



Plug Independent Music Award nominees this year include Battles, Of Montreal, Justice, Gui Boratto, Yeasayer, Dan Deacon, No Age, Sally Shapiro, Panda Bear, El-P, and XLR8R, we're happy to report. You can still vote up until February 8. Get on it at www.pluginwards.com.

VBS TV's awesome skate-documentary show *Epicly Later'd* recently began airing on MTV2.

industry and scene's lesser-known figures. First up: Craig Richards and Andrew Weatherall. fabriclondon.com/podcast.

Your favorite British club/mix-CD empire **Fabric** has launched its podcast series, where they'll host not only DJs' mixes but those of the

HeartbeatReggaePodcast.com. **Rawkus Records** has announced the Rawkus 50, the label's picks of the best artists in underground hip-hop artists. Find out who

made the cut at rawkus.com.

More on the podcast tip, reggae wellspring

Heartbeat Records has started its own as well at

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software at beatport.com.

HeartbeatReggaePodcast.com. **Rawkus Records** has announced the Rawkus 50, the label's picks of the best artists in underground hip-hop artists. Find out who made the cut at rawkus.com. Web-radio-and-art collective **Dublab** is now officially a nonprofit org. has just celebrated its eighth anniversary. For exclusive sets and tunes, visit dublab.com. Check out SYNC, Beatport and Native Instruments' new

screamers

Man Man

have signed to Anti-

in honor of their 10th anniversary, are reissuing the track that gave them their name, "Rush Hour," a mid-'90s Detroit classic by Population One, with new mixes by Rolando, Convexion, and Aardvarck. Check 'em at rushhour.nl.

While brick-and-mortar distributors continue to close (Amato, Goya, and Resist/React have all shut down in the last few months, leaving quite a void in the electronic music world), online download spots keep popping up, including

1. M.I.A "World Town"
The flute is insane; it makes you want to eat a serpent and dance.

2. Lost Sounds "You Must be a Witch"
This song brings back the raw energy of my youth. It reminds me of my first time hearing The Stooges' "Search and Destroy."

3. Suicide "Chezazza"
The real synth-punk avant-garde. So much intensity and simplicity.

4. Kocani Orkestar vs. Senor Coconut "Usti, Usti Baba"
The best song ever to dance to—gypsy beats with Latin rhythms.

5. Weird War "N.D.S.P."
The shakers man, the shakers. Intelligent, sexed-up dance music.

6. Chemise "She Can't Love You"
A great disco song: not too over the top, with amazing synths.

7. Turzi "Afghanistan"
A fast, psyched-out Krautrock song with a dark, sweet feeling to it.

8. The Willowz "Evil Son"
The video for this song is so beautiful; now it's one of my favorite songs ever.

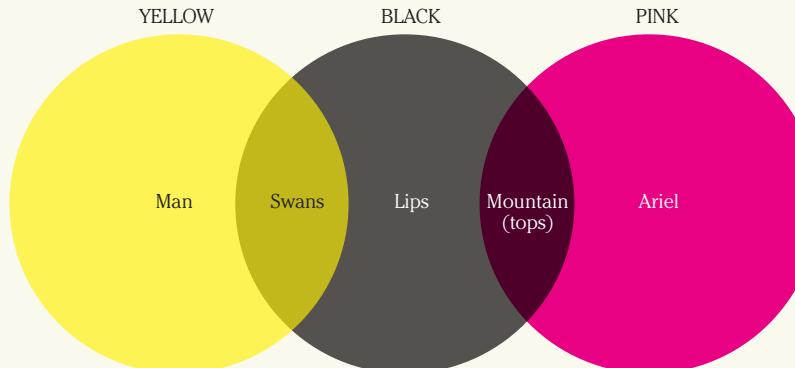
9. The Kinks "I'm Not Like Everybody Else"
The guitar and the lyrics are so touching, I think I might cry.

10. Giorgio Moroder "The Chase"
The best disco soundtrack for a dramatic movie (*Midnight Express*). Eight minutes of pure disco suspense.

We Are Wolves' *Total Magique* is out now on Dare to Care. www.wearewolves.net

The Office Charts:

1. Burial *Untrue* (Hyperdub)
2. M83 *Digital Shades, Vol 1* (Mute)
3. Magik Markers *Taste* (Ecstatic Peace!)
4. The Bug ft. Flowdan "Skeng" (Hyperdub)
5. To Kill A Petty Bourgeoisie *The Patron* (Kranky)
6. Pig & Dan *Imagine* (Cocoon)
7. Valet *Naked Acid* (Kranky)
8. Cassettes Won't Listen *One Alternative* (Dope Lotus)
9. Caribou *Andorra* (Merge)
10. Pinch *Underwater Dancehall* (Tectonic)



Lets Get Excited!

Expect new records in the coming months from ex-Antipop Consortium MC Mike Ladd, Tuning Spork Records head Jay Haze, Snoop Dogg (featuring the Zapp & Roger-esque "Sensual Seduction"), and electro-house-hopper Cadence Weapon.



Mixtape by We Are Wolves



Pimp C 1973-2007

"People need to realize that UGK were the group that set off the entire southern rap movement, whether they knew it or not. They were the first ones to do a lot of things and they came from an extremely small town in the middle of nowhere Texas. Pimp's voice is the base for all southern rap music. Without his voice, it definitely would not be the same today." -Matt Sonzala at *Houston So Real*.



:D Phone Pix! From Adult.

"On tour, most days are spent sitting in a car, followed by more sitting in a dark, stinky club, waiting to play, but some days are great! On our recent Europe tour we had a wonderful day of in the Swiss Alps. Here you can see our super awesome merch girl, Sarah Lurtz, nearly plunging to her death. Fun Times!"

www.adultperiod.com



WITH WOMEN
AS LOVERS, THE
INDESTRUCTIBLE BEAT
OF OAKLAND'S **XIU XIU**
TAKES AN
UNEXPECTED TURN.

WORDS: KEN TAYLOR
PHOTOS: MATHEW SCOTT

TRUTH



In the film *Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl*, a smart, innocent 15-year-old is sent away from her home in the Chinese city of Chengdu to apprentice as a horse herder during Mao Tse-Tung's Cultural Revolution. Despite her certainty that she'll probably never see her family again, Xiu Xiu holds out hope, only to be repeatedly raped by low-ranking officials who make empty promises to help her return home.

Suffice it to say, it all ends in tears, not unlike a great deal of the music made by Xiu Xiu, the Oakland, California band and brainchild of singer/guitarist Jamie Stewart. For the past six years, Stewart has managed to render the feelings of this abused titular character into ultra-personal discordant symphonies, whispered paens to dead relatives, and political calls-to-arms that are as danceable and epic as they are incendiary.

But Stewart need not simply relate to a "character"—each and every one of his stories is real, and whether they're backed by an 808 beat or a gamelan orchestra, they breathe with honesty, discomfort, and (lately) redemption, issuing a challenge to the indie rock world to cut itself free from the chains of irony, in-jokes, and being quirky for quirkiness' sake.

I LUV THE VALLEY, OH!

Stewart was born into the musical excesses of 1970s Southern California; his uncle John played in The Kingston Trio and wrote The Monkees' "Daydream Believer," and his dad, Michael, a session musician and songwriter, produced hits for Ahmad Jamal and Billy Joel's *Piano Man*.

"[My dad] was physically at home when I was a kid, but we didn't really hang out," the 35-year-old Stewart offers this afternoon from his kitchen in Oakland's famously rough-and-tumble Fruitvale neighborhood, where he serves his bandmate Caralee McElroy and me jasmine tea, nuts, and sliced fruit. "I think the fact that I fell asleep on the studio floor, as opposed to the couch, was a pretty good indication of what was going on," he says as he lets out a laugh.

Contrary to the impression one might get from his records, Stewart laughs often. In the face of the demons he's battled in his personal life, he's remarkably forthcoming, characterizing his parents' relationship as "really fucked, but in this sort of permanent-bond fucked kind of way."

In the '90s, the family moved from the San Fernando Valley to the Bay Area, where his dad worked as an engineer on MIDI software and early versions of Pro Tools; bit by bit, living in the suburbs

began to play a large role in who Stewart would become artistically.

"There seemed to be an entirely different mentality there," he says of Palo Alto. "It was kind of the first bougie place that I'd ever been. And it was *really* apparent there, much more so than in the Valley, which is this bizarre combination of ultra-wealth and ultra-poverty."

At that time, Stewart played bass in local dub and Motown cover bands, intending to follow in his dad's footsteps as a session musician.

"I just didn't really know a whole lot else," says Stewart. "For some reason, I largely sort of missed indie rock and punk. I *really* listened to everything else. The concept of DIY-ness didn't really come to me until a lot later. Like, I was listening to Otis Redding and Sade in high school... but alongside Bauhaus and The Cure."

LET THE MUSIC PLAY

Stewart's disparate musical interests all awkwardly coalesced in his short-lived project, The Indestructible Beat of Palo Alto—a musical byproduct of his love for Tom Waits, an *Indestructible Beat of Soweto* compilation that his mom gave him, and his being fired from three bands in one week, one of them for being bisexual. From IBOPA's ashes would rise Ten In the Swear Jar, where the skeleton of Xiu Xiu's sound began to take shape alongside Xiu Xiu co-founder (now ex-member) Cory McCulloch.

The major turning point was still to come,

"WE REALLY GENUINELY HOPE SOMEONE
GETS SOMETHING
FROM IT,
AND IF IT'S NOT FOR THEM,
THEN THEY CAN
FUCKING LISTEN TO ANIMAL COLLECTIVE."

JAMIE STEWART





though, at a dance club in San Jose on Christmas night. "I was just dancing alone and I realized how desperate and serious and uninhibited all the ['80s freestyle dance] songs were," says Stewart emphatically. "Like, every single one is just, 'Oh my god! I'm so upset! You don't love me anymore!' They're all incredibly straightforward. And [there's] no shyness about how emotional everybody who was singing was actually feeling. But, at the same time, it had a cool dance beat... That night I wrote what ended up being the first Xiu Xiu song ["Jennifer Lopez"], which was about that exact feeling."

Stewart and McCulloch drafted a rough mandate for how Xiu Xiu's sound would evolve. "We sat down and were like, 'Okay, we wanna make records that are made from *these* five influences, and we want to play from *this* specific place internally, and we want the lyrics to be about *this*,'" he offers

sincerely. The manifesto was thus: The songs were always to be "about real things that are either happening to the people in the band, or people who are close to us, or in politics." They would play them as honestly as possible. And they would incorporate elements of gay dance music, late-'70s/early-'80s British goth pop, Asian percussion, modern classical music, and atonal noise.

POLICY OF TRUTH

What they ended up crafting for their debut, *Knife Play* (5 Rue

Christine), and five subsequent albums, was an open diary where Stewart's quivering vocals (which can carom between whispers and wails in a matter of bars) melded with rock guitars, icy drum machines, electronics, and percussion that intentionally disrupted the songs instead of driving them forward. The tracks broach topics like AIDS, suicide, addiction, all manner of abuse, and pretty much every other societal ill you can think of, often while bearing friends' or relatives' proper names and airing their dirty laundry.

"It didn't use to be much of an issue until [2004's] *Fabulous Muscles* came out," Stewart explains. "There's a song on there that my mother and my sister just *flipped* about." The song in question is a spare, organ-and-horn-assisted ditty called "Nieces Pieces," where Stewart achingly croons gut-punching lines like "*I can't wait to tell you/ Your grandpa made your mommy play stripper/ While your*

"SOMETIMES THE
TRUTH HURTS.

AND THERE ARE
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TO THINK ABOUT

AGAIN."

CARALEE McELROY



uncle watched."

"Sometimes the truth hurts," McElroy interjects. "And there are certain things that—not just with family but with other people—they don't wanna have to think about again."

And so goes much of the band's back catalog, a collection of shelved (often shitty) moments in time, rendered with painstaking realism for the members' therapeutic purposes and only occasionally revisited in visceral onstage catharses and prodding interviews. (And sometimes not even then.

When pressed to recall the most harrowing moments of his life that he's turned into music, Stewart goes quiet, revealing only that one of them made it onto his latest opus, *Women as Lovers*.)

Yet *Women as Lovers*' first song, "I Do What I Want When I Want," suggests that things are a tad rosier in the House of Stewart these days. "It's about somebody who I told myself I shouldn't be in a relationship with," he explains, "and basically going, 'Well, fuck it. Go for it,' and actually having things turn out wonderfully." Listeners might also notice the song's lighter, tinkly vibes and the entire album's baby steps away from disorienting feedback and breakdowns.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Xiu Xiu's family bonds spread far and wide, extending to longtime collaborators and now full-time fixtures, drummer/

percussionist Ches Smith and bassist Devin Hoff. But it's the bond between Stewart and McElroy, Stewart's first cousin on his mom's side, that's instantly noticeable. The pair didn't know each other as children but their relationship flourished when Stewart moved to Seattle following his father's suicide in 2002.

McElroy was only 19 when she began touring to support *Fabulous Muscles*, and has since contributed mostly keys and vocals to *La Forêt*, *The Air Force*, and *Women as Lovers*. Along the way, she's



XIU XIU: JAMIE STEWART, CARALEE McELROY, DEVIN HOFF; NOT PICTURED: CHES SMITH

proven to be much more than just a performer in a band: though Stewart has come this far on his own, one gets the idea that now he might not be able to do it without her. She's his trusted confidante and teammate—and, if the song title "Little Panda McElroy" is any indicator, probably his muse.

"Me and Jamie have been through an incredible amount of stuff in our life: with each other, with being in a band that tours relentlessly, not having stable lives financially or not stable emotionally because we're both totally nuts... but I'm still sitting here," she laughs.

She's only half-joking about the "nuts" part, and it's something that Stewart has been accused of being in the past. Since the beginning, Xiu Xiu has had an intensely polarizing effect on the indie rock scene at large. The band's fans spend hours on message boards, decoding Stewart's discomforting, private-gone-public lyrics; his naysayers heckle him at shows. Stories of him getting felled onstage by drag queen Vaginal Davis and snapping nude pics of an impoverished Vietnamese hustler for the cover of *A Promise* are just cannon fodder for his detractors, especially when paired with his penchant for heart-on-sleeve melodrama—stuff that would make a lot of folks cringe.

"There are clearly some Xiu Xiu lyrics that are just like, 'Gah-awd!'" Stewart admits, chuckling, "but I mean at that moment, that's what was going on—and because I know at that moment it was genuine, I don't ever feel jive about it... People can take it or leave it, I don't give a fuck. No one in the band does. We really genuinely hope someone gets something from it, and if it's not for them," he says, cracking up, "then they can fucking listen to Animal Collective."

Xiu Xiu's *Women as Lovers* is out on January 29 on Kill Rock Stars. www.xiuxiu.org

 To hear the full interview with Xiu Xiu, visit XLR8R.com/114extras.

The Song Doesn't Remain the Same

Three essential Xiu Xiu cover songs for your next slumber party.



"Under Pressure" from *Women as Lovers* (Kill Rock Stars)

A centerpiece of the new album, "Under Pressure" features Stewart trading verses with McElroy and Angels of Light's Michael Gira in a redux of one of pop music's greatest duets. "I asked [Gira], someone I admire tremendously, to be a part of this song that was made by two people [Freddie Mercury and David Bowie] who completely changed my life," Stewart comments.

"Fast Car"

from *A Promise* (5 Rue Christine)

It's a wonder that Tracy Chapman's original ever made it to pop radio, considering its subject matter. Stewart's version takes liberty with the lyrics, changing the "dad" character's affliction from "the bottle" to "prescription drugs," and bringing a verge-of-a-nervous-breakdown immediacy to the song with his inimitable hushed falsetto.

"Don't Cha," from *Tu Mi Piaci EP* (Acuarela)

Unlike the Pussycat Dolls' approach, there's no attempt here to try to make this Tori Alamaze cover sexier. Stewart takes his distorted, hazed-over vocals into Marilyn Manson territory, with skronk-jazz elements and tortured drum machines providing the backbeat. When he asks, "Don't cha wish your girlfriend was a freak like me," he actually means it.



CHARISMATIC DANCEHALL

ARTIST

MUNGA

USHERS IN

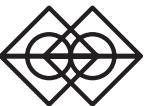
THE

NEXT ERA OF

INTELLIGENT GANGSTERS.

WORDS: [SARAH BENTLEY](#)

PHOTOS: [MARTEI KORLEY](#)



The midday sun beats down mercilessly on the House of David, a community composed of disciples, workers, and family members of prolific Boboshanti dancehall artist Capleton.

Although located in the heart of Kingston, Jamaica, the space has a country vibe. A rusty Honda Civic ("Capleton's first chariot") decays in a corner and a pigeon coop forms the back wall. An Ital chef fills Styrofoam trays with tofu, plantains, and rice and peas from a wooden pushcart. A locks dresser, one of many who specializes in dreadlock maintenance, tends to a lion's newly formed mane while elderly ladies, mothers of long-term House of David followers, scratch about the yard like fussing chickens. Would-be stars wait around every corner, singing like their lives depend on it; many have been following Capleton for years, hoping for a break. Singer Bamboo Man says he has been "waiting patiently for 10 years."

Only a year ago, 27-year-old Munga Honourable (real name: Damian Rhoden) was in the same position as Bamboo Man, his career highs consisting of a few conscious 7-inch single releases and appearances as a "banner man" (flag waver) at Capleton's stage shows. Today Munga is one of Kingston's hottest deejays, with a slew of rowdy singles—"Came to Take My Place," "Wine Pon It," "Earthquake," "Gangsters Do Dem Own Ting," and "Bad From Mi Born"—firing up dancehalls across the globe. If the relentless rotation of

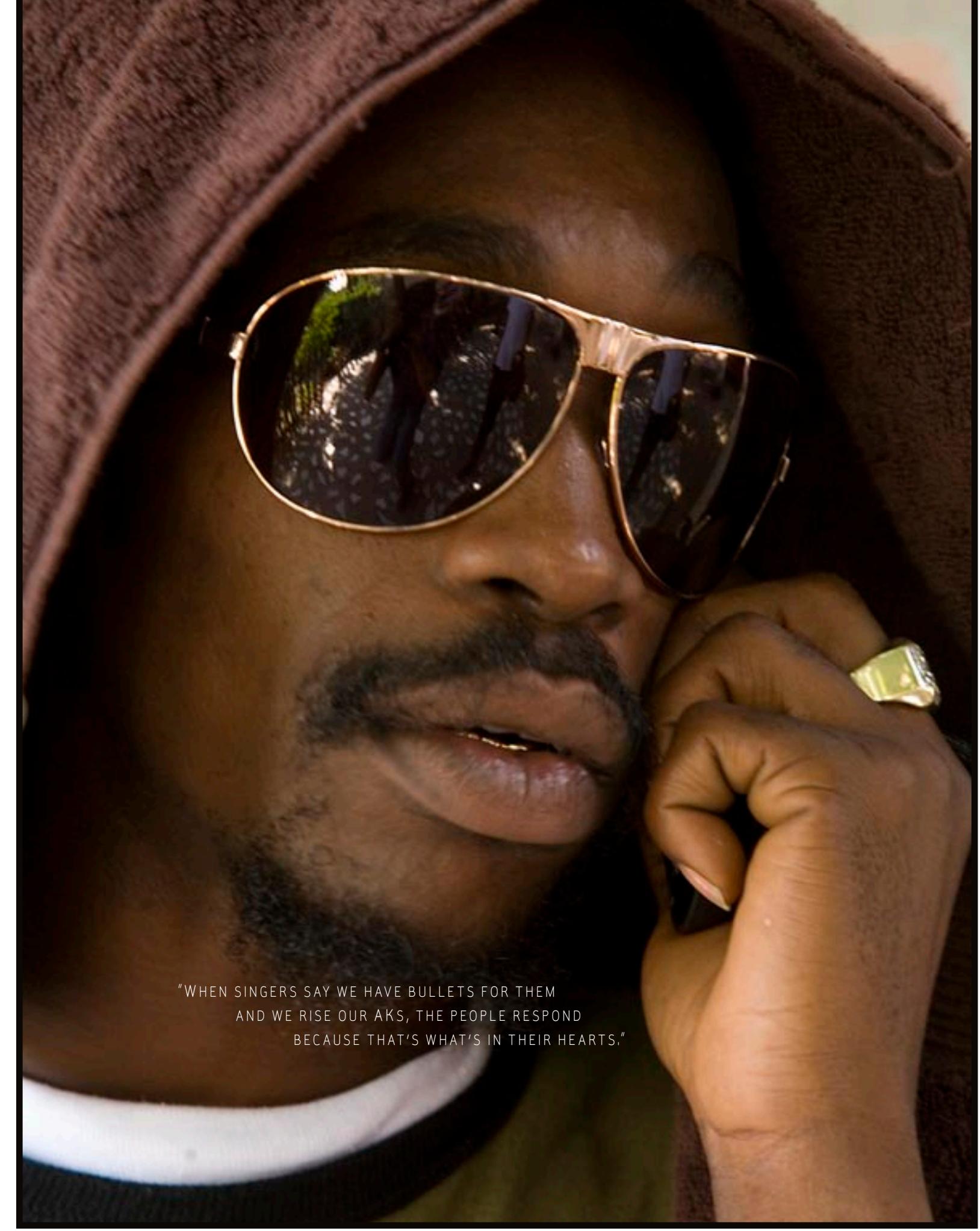
his tracks weren't affirmation enough of his rising star, one-man hit factory Don Corleon has brought him into his fold and is producing the bulk of his debut album, something the notoriously shrewd Corleon would only do if he thought he could make some serious dollars off him.

Munga caught the dancehall massive's attention because, like Mavado, he's got something different about him—his crunched-up, always-hyped Gangster Ras persona and galloping deejay style brought a new energy to the scene. His heavily AutoTuned tracks sparked a passionate debate within the dancehall community about whether he'd be able to carry off his vocals and high-pitched "Yes, yes" trill live. After a few shaky PAs, Munga found his stride and by last summer he had become one of the most exhilarating live performers on the circuit, projecting intense charisma, madcap energy, and a repertoire of doubt-squashing vocal tricks.

POLITICKIN'

A youth rolls into the House of David yard, a hand towel precariously balanced on top of his NY Yankees baseball cap. His gold teeth, twinkling sunglasses, and affected swagger scream "Check me out!"—as does his face-obscuring towel, which I later learn is Munga's "thing." "The artist is here," I'm informed. No shit.

Sitting under the shade of a tree laden with mangoes, Munga reveals there's a lot more going on under his headgear than his *gyal* and badman tunes let on. His vocab is noticeably more high-brow in person than in song and he's a keen debater, his answers ending with a response-demanding raised eyebrow.



"WHEN SINGERS SAY WE HAVE BULLETS FOR THEM
AND WE RISE OUR AKS, THE PEOPLE RESPOND
BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT'S IN THEIR HEARTS."



“NUFF NOISE PEOPLE MAKE ABOUT ME CALLING MYSELF A GANGSTER RAS INSTEAD OF LOOKING TO THE REAL GANGSTERS OF JAMAICA.”

“As you can probably gather,” he tells me with steely eye, “I’m a well-educated, well-read youth.”

Munga talks about Jamaica’s changing political climate and the impact that local gangs and their leaders have had on downtown communities. “The Don earn him ting by being a mediator for politicians. Problem now is people don’t know how to speak to their MP [Member of Parliament] or go through official channels to get what they want, they so used to dealing with the Don.”

The relatively peaceful aftermath of Jamaica’s 2007 election led international news to report that the notorious relationship between Jamaica’s street gangs and politicians had ended. Although this was vehemently refuted by many Jamaicans, the low number of politically motivated mortalities during the election period—seven people killed as opposed to the 888 who died in 1980’s general election—suggests it’s true. “The Dons are not affiliated to right or left politics anymore,” confirms Munga. “They doing their own thing now and control their communities however they want. If any of them call politics it’s usually just an excuse for getting money out the community.”

With Jamaica’s high unemployment, high homicide rates, plummeting currency, and increasingly strict immigration laws, Munga believes music is the “fabric” that keeps the nation together. “Without music people would sit down and think about dem problem and the place would erupt,” he offers. “Entertainers like I have a big influence on the Jamaican people. It’s time musicians were credited for our good work as opposed to critics trying to bring we down for our lyrics. ‘Nuff noise people make about me calling myself a Gangster Ras instead of looking to the real gangsters of Jamaica.’

HONOR REBEL

When Munga began his career, he was a different artist than the hoodie-rocking, violent-rhetoric-busting ball of fire he is now, with rumors flying around about him attempting to “juke” Casper (the producer of his hit song “Wine Pon It”) with a knife over a discrepancy about the track’s data files. When he sang conscious songs no one listened, but now that he talks about “bussing face” people can’t get enough. He attributes this to living in the era of

gangster music, the popularity of himself and his peers Busy Signal, Mavado, Aidonia, and Vybz Kartel a testament to the mood of Jamaica’s ghetto communities. He observes that the recent popularity of spiritual singjays like I-Wayne, Richie Spice, and Natty King was about “reasoning, love, and consciousness,” but now it’s “rebellion time.”

“As an artist, I reflect the thoughts of the people,” he says. “They say, ‘We gave you [meaning badman, gangs, rogue police, corrupt government] a warning and you nah hear, so now you get a more raw warning.’ When singers say we have bullets for them and we rise our AKs, the people respond because that’s what’s in their hearts at this point in time. It wasn’t the artists or music that put it there, it was the years of corruption that did it.”

He pauses to allow the weight of his words to sink into the throng of people that have gathered to eavesdrop on the interview. “When I sit down pon [Kingston ghettos] Jungle and Tivoli and talk to the youth, that what me a go reflect in the music. And until something happens in this country to make the lives of dem youth change, me nah go change.”

www.myspace.com/mungahonurable



inside out

SELF DESCRIBED OUTCAST
AND DREAM POP AUTEUR
BRADFORD COX
REVEALS HIS SOFTER SIDE
AS **ATLAS SOUND**.



When Deerhunter emerged early in 2007 with *Cryptograms*—their second album but first real statement as a band—they immediately distanced themselves from a pack of increasingly similar-sounding indie rock acts.

Deerhunter was part of a new strand of primitivist Atlanta rock that mined the depths of '60s pop and garage rock, but they stood apart even from their contemporaries, folding elements of ambient music, noise, and drone-rock into their music to create a novel brand of esoteric psychedelia. What's more, Deerhunter had a bright star in frontman Bradford Cox, a gangly, sometimes outrageous stage entertainer who shocked, occasionally offended, and steadily captivated audiences throughout 2007.

Cox, whose gentle affability belies his confrontational onstage persona, was born in Athens, Georgia but spent his adolescence in the suburb of Marietta. The affluent town—a breeding ground for ultra-conservative Republicans like Bob Barr and Newt Gingrich—was an odd fit. An artistic, effeminate soul, Cox suffers from Marfan Syndrome, a genetic disorder that causes victims to develop disproportionately long limbs and cardiovascular problems; by his own admission, he was "kind of a sickly kid." Cox also felt out of place with the culture in Marietta. "I had a lot of



"I NEVER
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friends but felt disconnected from them," he says. "My friends' parents all knew I was different, fucked up or whatever, but sort of turned a blind eye to it." So he grew up with a lingering sense of subversion—"a quiet rebellion," he calls it—that surfaces in the material Cox creates for Deerhunter and his solo project, Atlas Sound.

After dropping out of high school, Cox stayed behind in Marietta with other "outcast-y, loser-y kids, just sitting around smoking pot, doing nothing," he says. In 2001, despite having "zero interest" in the band, he was dragged to a Black Lips show. Cox felt an immediate kinship with the group and would develop an intense friendship with its singer, Cole Alexander. Cox already had an interest in the Athens alternative rock scene—and the proto-garage sound that inspired it—and admired Black Lips for "combining that with this really psychotic noise element, really degenerate-sounding." And, he adds, "They're undeniably fucked up. We immediately bonded because of that. I knew they weren't full of

shit." The two bands would grow together in a treacherous Atlanta scene full of "heroin [and] outsider kids," and would share in debilitating lows (including the deaths of bandmembers) before eventually becoming hotly tipped on the indie rock circuit.

His relationship with Alexander is one of the few things Cox is slightly hesitant to speak about. He describes the friendship as "complicated" and "co-dependent" but tenses up a bit when pressed for details. "Cole and I bonded to such a bizarre extent," he says. "We literally were not apart from each other for months at a time. There was a lot that was 'almost' about it." At some point, the two drifted apart, but they continue to inspire one another through a shared aesthetic and approach to creating music.

That style, "a primitive [one], an immediacy," Cox puts it, is obvious in both bands' work. In the case of Deerhunter, this primal aggression is

seamlessly combined with a beauty and vulnerability that it seems at odds with—this intriguing mixture of power and decay made *Cryptograms* and its follow-up EP, *Fluorescent Grey*, some of the finest guitar-driven music of the past several years.

A hyper-prolific songwriter, Cox recorded continuously while touring for *Cryptograms*, dreaming up a batch of tender material that wasn't quite right "for a five-piece rock band," he says. Initially recorded as 4-track demos, many of the songs were posted on the band's well-visited blog (deerhuntertheband.blogspot.com) before his label, Kranky, set him up with a laptop to lay down the ideas properly. The resulting tracks became *Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See But*



Cannot Feel—his first official release as Atlas Sound—an album of gorgeously textured, deteriorating dream-pop.

Let the Blind... is essentially a bedroom recording—its songs retain a spur-of-the-moment quality because Cox's approach to creating tunes isn't based on conventional composition. Rather than conceiving an idea for a piece, writing it, and recording it, he instead seeks to capture a feeling. "I'm not a songwriter in the traditional sense," he explains. "I have no ability to sit at a piano and 'craft' a song. It's more about what's happening in a room." When asked to explain his intentions for *Let the Blind...*, he quickly counters, "There's never any intention. Everything on the Atlas Sound record is just... recorded. I never do second takes, I never clean up anything. It's kind of documentary-style." One might think this stream-of-consciousness methodology would leave tremendous room for error, but in Cox's skilled hands, tracks like the dazzling "River Card" and garage-pop number "Ativan" sound as if he's been shaping them for years.

While Cox makes it clear he didn't set out to make *Let the Blind...* an ambient record, the album is

noticeably more atmospheric than his work with Deerhunter and markedly softer—if not outright prettier. He agrees, describing the record as "less masculine" and "more asexual," and notes that the influence of electronic music is much more apparent. "I'm just as much influenced by Markus Guentner or Wolfgang Voigt as I am the '60s pop song," he offers. That's clear on "Quarantined," the record's most buoyant track, and "On Guard," both of which pulsate with the repetitive thump of minimal techno. Early electro is a clear inspiration as well—the work of Kraftwerk, Todd Dockstader, and Raymond Scott all had a hand in sculpting the album's feel, says Cox.

Speaking reverently about Kraftwerk's improvisational third record *Ralf & Florian*, which he describes as "perfect," Cox stumbles onto something potentially profound about his own work. "I've always been really interested in creating ambient music and repetitive electronic music but with organic or acoustic instruments that have certain limitations or flaws. I think that just sounds more interesting," he says. Tossing the comment aside and quickly moving on to a new topic, Cox doesn't stop to ponder that he's probably just pinpointed what makes his new album so exceptional—he simply forges ahead to the next idea.

Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See But Cannot Feel is out February 19 on Kranky. www.myspace.com/bradfordcox, www.kranky.net



Deer Diary

Bradford Cox's track-by-track notes on the new Atlas Sound record.

A Ghost Story

"In the background are treated hammered dulcimers soaked in enough reverb that they almost have a vocal quality."

Recent Bedroom

"This is a song about losing your ability to express your emotions as you get older. It was inspired by my reaction to the death of my aunt."

Quarantined

"This song was inspired by an article I read about Russian children living with AIDS."

River Card

"Based on a short story from a book of Puerto Rican fiction I found at a thrift store."

On Guard

"A lullaby about social anxiety."

Winter Vacation

"When I first met my best friend Lockett in high school, it was right before Thanksgiving break. The next day my family took a trip to the beach. It was freezing, grey, and depressing and my parents fought the whole time."

Scraping Past

"Thinking about my new friend kept me feeling good, and made everything seem charged with excitement."

Cold as Ice

"I came home one night and Lockett was in his room playing guitar. I recorded a few segments and looped them. It has a heavy African feel to me."

Ready Set Glow

"I wanted to make a hymn or a vesper with strobe lights."

Small Horror

"The most emotional and embarrassing thing I have ever made. I left it on to function as the album's major flaw."

Ativan

"A sad song about benzos and failed relationships and spring reverb."

After Class

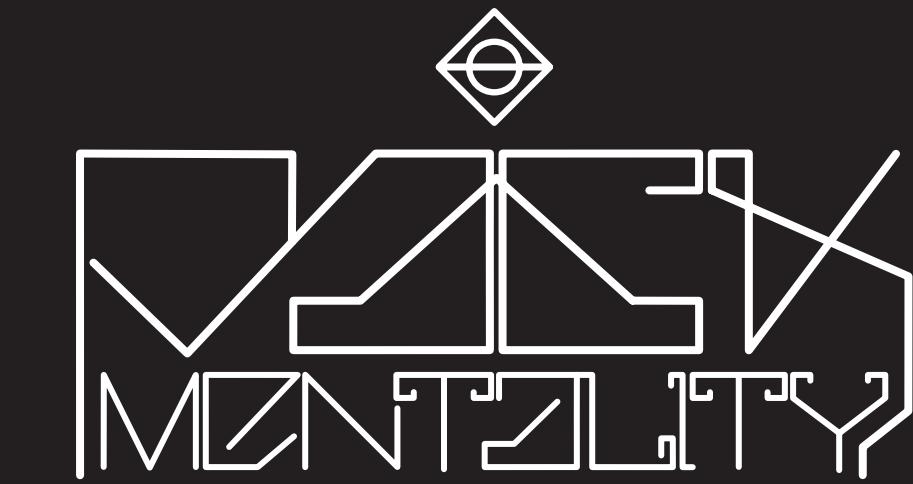
"Just for fun. A printout of a garage-pop song from a 'new computer perspective.'"

Ready Set Glow

"I wanted to make a hymn or a vesper with strobe lights."

Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See But Cannot Feel

"See, it was all only a dream..."



WORDS: ERIC K. ARNOLD PHOTOS: SILKE LABSON

BARELY OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL,

BAY RAP PHENOMS **THE PACK**

FLY THE FLAG

FOR URBAN PUNK ROCK,

FROM LEFT: YOUNG L, UNO, LIL B, STUNNA

At last, a hip-hop group that's unashamed to say they still live at home with their parents.

Three-quarters of Bay Area rap sensations The Pack are still in their teens, but they've already been enshrined into pop-culture immortality.

Their debut single, "Vans," took over MTV and earned a Top 5 mention in *Rolling Stone's* Top 100 of 2006. Not bad for a song that producer Young L made in just 15 minutes about \$35 canvas sneakers.

Recorded in 2005, "Vans" piggybacked on the hyphy scene's popularity, yet clearly established its own momentum (as of November 2007, it had clocked over 4.7 million hits on MySpace).

At last, a hip-hop group that's unashamed to say they still live at home with their parents.

Once the song was added to commercial radio playlists, request lines quickly flooded. Just like that, The Pack's fab four—Young L, Stunna, Uno, and Lil B—had a hit on their hands. "We didn't have to promote it," marvels Young L (at 20, the group's elder statesman). "I really didn't think 'Vans' was gonna be that big," says Stunna. "We put it on MySpace and it took off, started running like it had legs."

"A lot of people said, 'How you gonna wear Vans and then be a rapper? You talking about thug shit. You can't play both sides. You need to pick and choose,'" says Stunna, 19. "We were like, 'Fuck that.' We ran through adversity and embraced it. And I think that's the whole reason it took off like that. We embraced the fact that we were different. Instead of running from it, instead of trying to hide our differences, we wore 'em on our shoulders. People accepted it."

"Vans" was a perfect song. I don't know if we can ever do that again," Young L says. The song's phenomenal success is a "difficult standard" to maintain, he adds. "It's gonna take a lot of creative energy."

ON BASE
Certainly, expectations have been raised now that The Pack has released its major-label debut, *Based Boys*. But then, the group has much energy to spare. "I'm coming at the game like I want to take everything over," says Lil B, at 17, the youngest of the bunch. "I speak for myself but I can [also] speak for The Pack. We want to move the whole rap game... flood [it] with mixtapes, videos, shows, as much stuff as we can do. We be working. We're young, energetic, and really ready to take over."

Based Boys' 17 tracks (all but four produced by Young L) establish The Pack as a charismatic, somewhat naughty hip-hop boy band with a wide-ranging appeal. Unlike most boy

bands, though, they have street cred, mixed with a party-friendly, uptempo flavor that draws from both crunk and hyphy but isn't beholden to either.

"When we started out, we were a hyphy group. But we kinda grew outta that," Young L explains. "When hyphy first started, everybody in the Bay jumped on it," he recalls. "People thought it was gonna be the next big thing."

A major knock on hyphy was that its biggest, most nationally known artists—E-40 and Too \$hort—weren't exactly new faces. Meanwhile The Pack are not only from the young generation, they rep it to the fullest, staying dipped in fresh gear and possessing large amounts of what Young L calls "swagg" (swagger).

Young L describes The Pack's style as "fly, flashy, somewhat hood, trendy, and creative." He explains that the term "based," like "hyphy," used to have negative connotations—derived from "basehead" or dope fiend. But The Pack flipped the phrase: It now means "being creative to the point of acting high," Young L says, as well as being "leftfield, original, free-willed."

To its credit, *Based Boys* doesn't drown listeners with predictable beats. Instead, it relies on a minimal, often sparse, bass-driven, and nearly sample-free aesthetic reminiscent of ghetto-tech and electro-funk. Young L ambitiously states his goal is to be a "super-producer," and there's no denying his knack for crafting fresh-sounding tracks like "I Look Good," the silly but raucous new single "In My Car," and the cheeky, audacious "My Girl Gotta Gurl Too." Many of the album's tracks extol the virtues of "boppers," which Uno, 19, defines as "a girl who loves penis and is not afraid of it."

BOUNCE, ROCK, SKATE
Despite their hood-star status, as evidenced by their penchant

for grills and tats, The Pack aren't your garden-variety turf cats. Young L, Stunna, and Uno are all avid skateboarders, and while the hip-hop-skater demographic has boomed since "Vans" and Lupe Fiasco's "Kick, Push," Young L is quick to point out that skateboarding has long been part of their lifestyle.

As a little kid, Young L remembers watching pioneering African American rider Stevie Williams do his thing at San Francisco's Pier 7. Before becoming a musician, Young L was a competitive boarder in Pro-Am events throughout California. Nowadays, he still finds time to get on his stick. Matter of fact, he reports, "I saw Stunna at the skate park today."

"People have always been into skateboarding, that's how I look at it," says Stunna, who took up the sport in the sixth grade. "The day I hopped on a board, I learned to ollie," he boasts. Back then, "People looked at me weird 'cause I was a black dude." In high school, Young L says, "The black people would think we were trying to be like white people." Even so, he says, "We embraced that lifestyle."

They've also embraced the "urban

punk rock" image. "It's like, flashy colors, '80s style... the whole rock-star look," explains Young L of the style, which mixes studded belts and Slayer belt buckles with all-over print hoodies and fitted caps. "Vans" success helped popularize that look, but Young L is careful to give props to underground Bay Area rappers The Diligentz, who went one step further by coming out with a song called "Punk Rock" in 2006 (its remix features The Pack).

YOUNGEST IN CHARGE

For his part, Young L says, "I feel we are the voice of the young generation," echoing the words of Too \$hort (who took the young rappers under his wing and helped them get their record deal). \$hort calls The Pack "the prime example of young kids taking advantage of the new Bay Area hip-hop sound... They're the new kids on the block, literally."

Despite their youthful antics, The Pack dudes show maturity beyond their years. Fame, says Lil B, "really doesn't faze me. I don't even got a (drivers) license, so, some people, they might even see me on the bus... I don't try to act like anything that I'm not. I'm not a star until I go platinum. Until then, I'm just somebody with a hot record."

The Pack's *Based Boys* is out now on Jive Records.
www.myspace.com/thepack

To see the full punk-rap timeline, visit
XLR8R.com/114extras

Times to Get Ill

In the late '70s and early '80s, the nascent punk and hip-hop scenes—arguably contemporary pop culture's most creative and influential youth-oriented movements—frequently converged, before eventually adopting differing demographics and aesthetics. Or did they?

Words: Eric K. Arnold Photos: Eric K. Arnold & Silke Labson

1977	1979	1981	1983	1986	1989	1993	1994	1996	1998	2000	2003	2004	2006
Bob Marley hangs out with filmmaker/DJ Don Letts in London and releases the single "Punky Reggae Party."	Bad Brains form in Washington, D.C.	Grandmaster Flash opens for The Clash in Times Square, while Futura 2000 paints backdrops for the band's European tour.	Cold Crush Brothers release the single "Punk Rock Rap."	Run-DMC and Aerosmith release "Walk this Way."	A year after sampling Slayer, Public Enemy teams with Anthrax for "Bring the Noize."	Souls of Mischief release '93 Til Infinity; Wu-Tang Clan releases Enter the Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers. Both become extremely popular with hip-hop and skate audiences.	Del tha Funky Homosapien releases No Need for Alarm, a seminal influence on alt-rap.	Dr. Octagon's alt-rap classic Dr. Octagonecologyst features cover art by Pushhead, known for his work with metal and punk bands.	Dancehall don Buju Banton teams with punk superstars Rancid.	Rage Against the Machine covers Minor Threat, the MC5, SoulSonic Force, Cypress Hill, and Eric B. & Rakim on Renegades.	James Spooner's documentary Afro-Punk documents the black rock experience.	Pharrell Williams refers to himself as "Skateboard P" on Snoop Dogg's "Drop it Like It's Hot."	Chicago's Lupe Fiasco releases skate-themed single "Kick, Push."

Blondie's "Rapture," which name-drops Flash and Fab Five Freddy, hits #1.

McLaren releases *Duck Rock*, featuring hip-hop crew the World Famous Supreme Team.

Former Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren releases *Duck Rock*, featuring hip-hop crew the World Famous Supreme Team.

Run-DMC releases "Rock Box," the first rap-rock fusion track.

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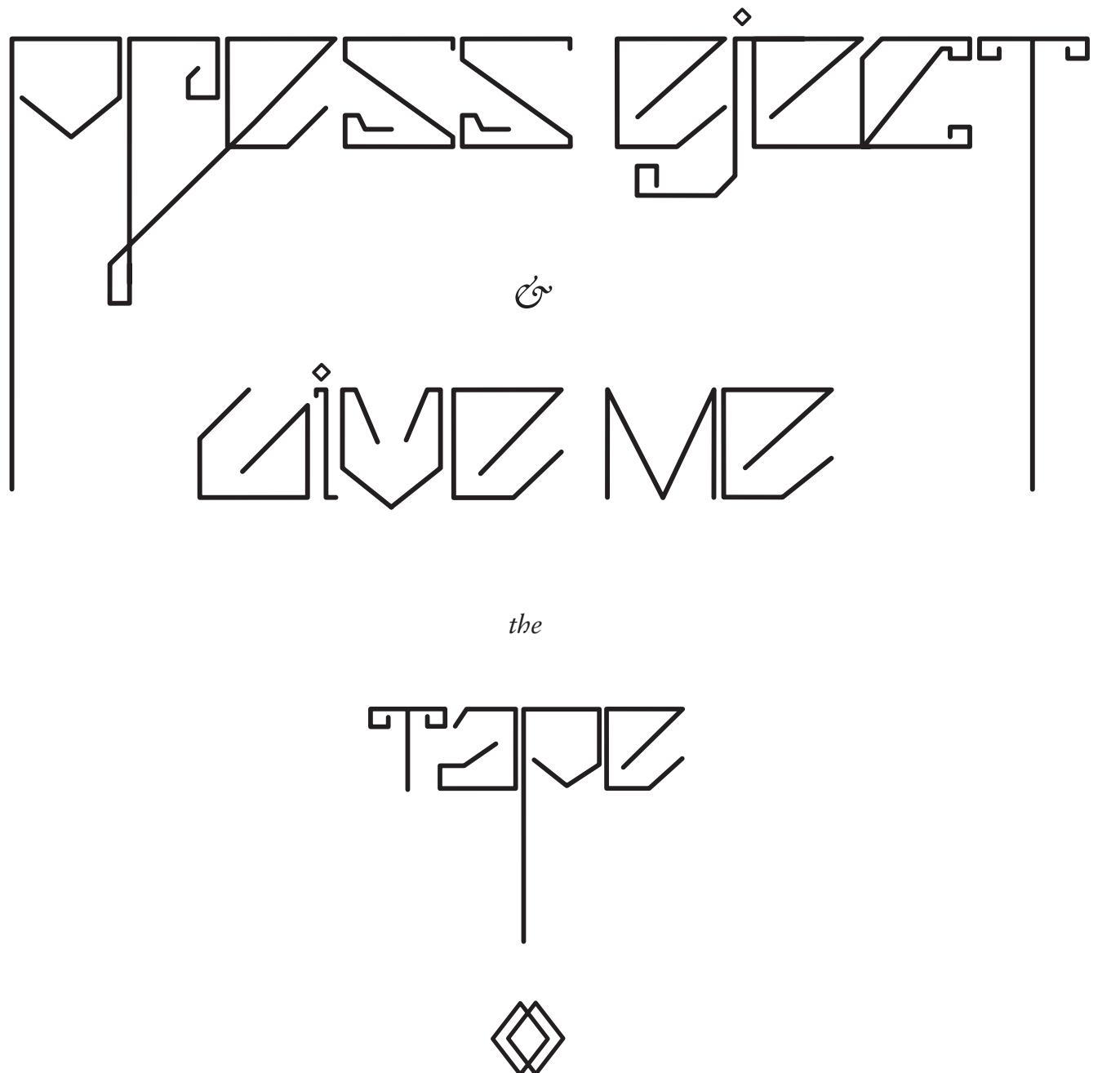
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Photography:
Jeremy Liebman

Styling:

Masayo Kishi

Photographer's Assistant:

Joan Hernandez

Stylist's Assistant:

Jeremy Myers

PSYCHIC ILLS

(from left) **Jimmy Seitzang:**
Jacket by Schott; model's
Shirt by Fred Perry, belt
by G Star; model's
own jeans;
Tres Warren: Leather

Jacket by Schott; model's
own shirt, jeans, and
sunglasses;
Elizabeth Hart: Blazer by
G Star; model's own shirt,

leggings, and jewelry;
Brian Tamborello:
Cardigan by Fred Perry;
model's own shirts and
pants.





SIGHTINGS

(from left)

Richard Hoffman: PVC jacket by Energie, model's own pants; **Jon Lockie:** Jacket and striped sweater by Miss Sixty, turtleneck by G Star, model's own jeans and belt; **Mark Morgan:** Jacket by Energie, shirt by Report, model's own jeans.

TELEPATHY

(from left)

Busy Gangnes: Jacket and bodysuit by Miss Sixty, jeans by True Religion, sunglasses by Claw Money. **Melissa Livaudais:** Hoodie by Puma, t shirt by Maharishi, shorts with suspenders by Energie, gloves by Burton, sunglasses by Colab.





EXCETER

(from left)

Lala Ryan: Silver jacket by Miss Sixty, model's own shirt and jeans; John Fell Ryan: Model's

own t-shirt, jacket, and hat, pants by Stüssy, belt by Miss Sixty, sunglasses by Colab; Clare Amors: Vest by Energie, sunglasses

by Colab, model's own scarf and pants; Jon Winfield Nicholson: Sweater by Fred Perry, shirt by Report, pants by Energie, model's

own jacket, jewelry, sunglasses, and helmet; Dan Hougland: Shirt by Stüssy, model's jacket, scarf, jeans and belt; Nathan Corbin: Leather vest by G Star, model's own jeans.



CRUNC TESLA & HIS ARMY

(Top row from left):

Tamara: Jacket by Claw Money, model's own t-shirt, scarf, and jewelry;

Steph-1: Dress by Miss Sixty, jewelry by Delphine Charlotte Parmentier, model's own jacket;

Boxcar: Jacket by G-Star,

BJ Star: Blouse by Kloset, jeans by G-Star;

Optimis: Pants, hat, and belt by Stüssy, necklace by Kloset, shirt by Puma, jacket by Miss Sixty;

Devang Shah: Jacket by Jibb Hunt, necklace by Kloset, sunglasses by Colab

(Middle row from left):
True Religion, belt by Stüssy, jewelry by Delphine Charlotte Parmentier;

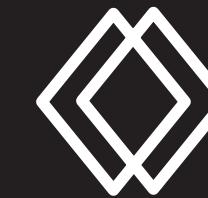
Twilight: T-shirt by Stüssy;

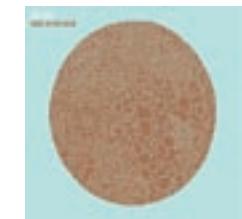
InfiniTEE: Tuxedo jacket by Amongst Strangers;

Seraphim: Jacket by G-Star, hat by Burton;

(Bottom row from left):
Energie: Cardigan by Puma, model's own sunglasses;

Raedawn (a.k.a. Crunc Tesla):
Jacket by G-Star, pants by Energie, cardigan by Puma, model's own sunglasses.





Run through the watchwords that describe Western culture in the first decade of the 21st century, and you have ready-made lyrics for one of Hot Chip's liturgical choruses: irony and supplication; fetish without fantasy; retro-future and science-fiction; blogs not barstools; the prominence of the whim. Beginning with the gangsta-nerd breakthrough *Coming on Strong*, and its follow-up, 2006's *The Warning*, London's Hot Chip has made records that appeal to a sense of imperfection all too perfectly, concocting a worldview in which the arrhythmic dance hero and the also-also-ran stand together on an Olympic podium. In other words, Hot Chip seems to want to be all the things most artists settle for after the fact—a one-hit wonder or a guilty pleasure, underground phenom or bedroom icon, a cult classic/not-bestseller. But, as is poetic justice for the Don Quixote wannabe, success, admiration, and accolades from both pundit and populace keep getting in the way.

With *Made in the Dark*, Hot Chip has transcended to a state of alchemical reaction, their music the semi-naturally occurring result of sociocultural interactions and the philosopher's stones of cold irony and warm electronics. Electro-funk and arena cheese, the self-obsession of the iEverything generation, drag racing and congestion charges, Willie Nelson and William Blake—all trickle down like an '80s economy into the magic potion of Hot Chip-ness. It makes *Made in the Dark* into something that's not as instantly likeable as their previous full-length albums. After all, sometimes it just sucks to look at your culture in the mirror. But at the same time, *Made in the Dark* was always going to be their best yet.

Hot Chip's last album-length release, a mix for !K7's *DJ-Kicks* series, showed a little bit of the group's musical roots: Club bangers, '60s club soul, and brash arena-rockisms crossed with minimalist techno and a penchant for soft balladry. Much has been made of the group slowly unleashing its "rock" leanings on the world, and it's true that the guitar makes several

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appearances on *Made in the Dark*. But to Hot Chip, rock has a different meaning. It's a dead language, resurrected to confound an imperial overseer, like on "One Pure Thought," which starts like Talk Talk playing Journey, and winds up like an ironic take on Depeche Mode's biblical moments—albeit while name-dropping Nile Rogers.

Hot Chip's signature sound is still here in droves: high-muted harmonies and cheeky lyrical jabs ("I've got a roll of coins/I'm aimin' for your loins") show up on tunes that bounce between floor-packing dance anthems and shoulder-swaying piano ballads. There's plenty of references to dance music—from reggaeton and hip-hop to funk and neo-soul—but they're stilted by the jerky rationality of an emotionally muted Londoner, collar turned up against driving rain and awkward glances. Even during *Made in the Dark*'s most put-ya-hands-up moments (and there are lots), there's that self-deprecating honesty that seems to define the oughties. "Hold On," for example, drives on hand-clap rims and acidic funk basslines, only to end with palindrone-like drones and the testosterone-free Oxbridge bar threat, "Sir, I've a good mind to take you/Outside/Outside."

If Hot Chip is the flagship of 21st-century self-doubt—a generation of young men raised on technology and the unavoidable future of erectile dysfunction drugs—then *Made in the Dark* is its *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the simulacrum of experience and to forge in the smithy of a microchip the uncreed conscience of my race." *Justin Hopper*



DISRUPT
FOUNDATION BIT
Werk/UK/CD
With *Foundation Bit*, Disrupter Jan Gleichmar has created a simple but brilliant gem, drenched in dub techniques, rich in narrative, and which plays up the tension inherent in Jamaican-derived music. On one hand, there's the familiar: the endlessly recycled basslines you know like an old friend from a thousand versions in a dozen genres; the 8-bit sound that recalls both '80s dancehall and videogames, while still paying tribute to dub of both the '70s (King Tubby) and the '00s (Pole, Rhythm and Sound); the snippets from a dozen half-remembered sci-fi films. On the other hand, there's *Disrupt*'s wild creativity, which re-combines the familiar in magical new ways, delivering on the promise that digi-dub always had but never managed to quite nail. Many of these tunes were already available from Jahtari.org, but here Werk has collected the best into a melancholy, beguiling, living, dubbing masterwork. *Matt Earp*



BURIAL
UNTRUE
Hyperdub/UK/CD
Untrue showcases Burial's experimental version of dubstep taken to its logical extreme. All the elements of his debut are here: the huge Slowdive-style synths; the extremely tight, skipping beats; the emasculated, altered, disembodied soul vocals; and the fanatic attention to every sound's detail and clarity. At its best moments, the album can be breathtaking (check the ecstatic, relentless drive of "Ghost Hardware" or the spooky second half of "Homeless," where the synths fall away, leaving the Alex Reese-style bass and drums exposed). But *Untrue* is bogged down in indulgent, beatless interludes, and lacks the variation that Burial is capable of. The difference between emotional and overwrought will likely depend on your mood. *Matt Earp*



GUSSIE CLARKE
DREAD AT THE CONTROLS DUB
Auralux/UK/CD
Augustus "Gussie" Clarke produced JC Lodge's huge Billboard-charting 1988 dancehall hit "Telephone Love," establishing a reputation as Jamaica's most sophisticated producer. A decade before his Music Works studio struck '80s gold with a run of juggernaut hits by Lodge, Shabba Ranks, Gregory Isaacs, and others, Clarke linked with Sly Dunbar's Revolutionaries studio band for this 1978 set. Although the title references Clarke's DJ friend Michael "Mikey Dread" Campbell's "Dread at the Controls" handle, Campbell isn't featured in any way. Instead, Clarke dubs 10 funky, soulful, romantic, horn- and flute-accented instrumentals that backed '70s stalwart

artists Mighty Diamonds, Leroy Smart, and The Tamlins. None devastated the charts, but all were hints at the genius to come. *Tomas Palermo*

COCOA TEA

BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Minor7Flat5/GER/CD

These are some serious times and this reggae vet has plenty to say. Arguably his most political record since his "Blood for Oil" and "Oil Ting" singles were banned from Jamaica and the U.K. during the first Gulf War, *Biological Warfare* attacks with a vengeance on tracks like "New World Order." Whether speaking out on World Bank policies on the record's best track, "Blood and Fyah," or environmental genocide on "Stop Tell Lie," Cocoa Tea's melodic vocals—produced by Brotherman and backed by musicians from the stellar Firehouse Crew—illustrate his bitter disdain for world leaders. For three decades, Tea's brew of conscious roots and culture music has entertained audiences, and with *Biological Warfare*, he shows no signs of complacency. *James Mayo*

DAFT PUNK

ALIVE 2007

Virgin/US/2CD

A year ago, few people had seen the live Daft Punk spectacle, and (along with their robotic doppelgangers) that was part of the fun. Their latest release captures the duo live in front of 18,000 fans at Paris' Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy, but after numerous high-profile performances (and even more low-profile bloggings), some of the excitement may have drained. That's not to say the tracks here aren't exhilarating; almost every cut is reworked or mashed up, and with each build-up, the anticipation in the arena is palpable (think: *football* match). As a live electronic album, this is a huge success; as a historical document, stick to the Coachella YouTube videos. *Ross Holland*

ALEXIS GIDEON

FLIGHT OF THE LIOPHANT

Sickroom/US/CD

A rollercoaster ride that swings madly between Animal Collective forest-creature wail, Beck's *Mellow Gold*-era dust-hop, and quick-looping Dan Deacon gadgetry, *Flight of the Liophant* is a stellar, absolutely manic leftfield surprise. Portlander (by way of Chicago, and ex-band Princess) Alexis Gideon made a small mark touring with Deacon, but this is an explosion. Gideon has pegged his own music as "schizo" but, stripped of seams, that barely comes close: A handsome Frankenstein's monster, this one slips with alarming ease between clattering, percussive no-wave noise breaks and unironic twang, Busdriver-paced rhymes and deep, Calvin Johnson-style country croons. At the very least, Gideon will find himself with a cult—whether they're dancing or swaying. *Michael Byrne*

HANGAR 18

SWEEP THE LEG

Definitive Jux/US/CD

Despite their indie leanings, Hangar 18 has all the trappings of heavily manufactured rap. The rhymes are so-so: It's a tag-team of three members, something totally unnecessary given no one differs enough in tone, flow, or style for us to bother learning their names (though *Sweep the Leg* is so overproduced it'd be hard to tell anyhow). The record is joke-y but not smart enough for dumb lines about clubbing baby seals and "dumb bitches" to come across as anything but dumb. "Room to Breathe" stands out with its solid chorus and some nice guitar-laced production, as does "Really Wide"—which could just be because it hurries itself along—but street-life cliché "Watchyoself" is laughably bad. *Michael Byrne*

MICHAL HO

SCREW THE COFFEEMAKER

TuningSpork/GER/CD

After issuing two dozen 12s—many with the excellent Samim—that have been caned in Ibiza and by avant-techno don Ricardo Villalobos, Michal Ho finally delivers his debut full-length. Rare is the techno or house album that can be spun without the urge to fast-forward or skip tracks, but Ho has wrought an all-killer/no-filler disc that should deliver huge grins to risk-taking DJs and fearless dancers worldwide. *Screw the Coffeemaker* contains 11 tracks of outbound tech-house that are simultaneously warm and adventurous, sexy and cerebral. Much of the album bears a madcap tonal palette and relentless momentum that recalls Matthew Herbert's finest work, but Ho's more about the pleasure principle, forgoing the heavy-handed commentary on corporate and political corruption. *Dave Segal*

KILN

DUSKÉR

Ghostly International/US/CD

Never the types to hog the spotlight, despite their instrumental prowess, Michigan-based KILN, the trio of Kevin Hayes, Kirk Morrison, and Clark Rehberg III, puts out little in the way of biographical information and, in fact, never plays live; their hushed instrumentals are similarly unassuming. Simple melodic structures act as scaffolding for an ebb-and-flow array of sounds: creaks, pops, crinkles, cricket chirps, even static fuzz on "Rustdusk." The result is gentle, unhurried, and comforting, building through cycles so that changes come gradually. KILN risks sleepiness and preciousness, but largely avoids both with its rich, intriguing textures. *Luciana Lopez*

LAWNCHAIR GENERALS

AROUND THE BLOCK

Nordic Trax/CAN/CD

House fans have likely already heard these tracks from the Seattle duo of Peter Christianson and Carlos Mendoza, who have been pumping out Chicago-esque sounds since 2001 from their self-made studio. This album—their first full-length, though they've released several EPs—collects their best work, including remixes of others, all of which has appeared elsewhere. Still, the music's familiarity doesn't detract from its appeal, and the men's smooth mixing helps, too. Highlights include their warm remix of "Really Don't Stop," by Martin Venetioki with Derek Conyer. Not a substitute for new work, but a reminder of the quality LCG have maintained for years (and hopefully a sign of more to come). *Luciana Lopez*

LETTERS LETTERS

S/T

Type/UK/CD

It's difficult not to hear Letters Letters' debut as a reaction to the defiant indie mega-pop of their fellow Montreal bands Arcade Fire and Wolf Parade. The trio's sound here is anything but "big": acoustic guitars make way for atonal washes of noise, understated angst-ridden vocals rarely leave the lower-registers, and the use of electronics is both quirky and restrained. *Letters Letters* works best when a bit of melody pokes through the melancholy fuzz and the broken, scattering clicks meld into a syncopated beat. In these moments, the surrounding druggy abstraction and drone get the weight they deserve and the tracks shimmer. *Letters Letters* isn't a great album, but it's certainly an interesting one. *Ross Holland*

MAC LETHAL

11:11

Rhymesayers/US/CD

On 11:11, his official debut album, Kansas City's Mac Lethal comes out swinging, bringing some clever lyrics, humor by the boatload, and a strong mic presence. Unfortunately, he has a tendency for lacing otherwise good songs with terrible hooks ("Pound that beer!") and corny one-liners ("My tear ducts are dry"). Tracks like "Crazy" and "Rotten Apple Pie" are fun, but quickly become expendable after a couple listens. The closing track, "Sun Storm," is the high point, and shows that with the right beat and concept, Mac can hold your attention. With that said, his songwriting setbacks make his debut a bit disappointing. *David Ma*

TOM MIDDLETON

LIFETRACKS

Six Degrees/US/CD

He hails from the English coast of Cornwall, sports a bearded visage in nearly every photo, has a production credit on the original *Analogue Bubblebath* EP—you're thinking Aphex Twin, right? Actually, Tom Middleton is the man in question, a major force behind Global Communication, Cosmos, Reload, Jedi Knights, and myriad other aliases. Harkening back to the angelic bliss of Global Communication's 76:14, Middleton's solo debut, *Lifetracks*, is swathed with emotion from start to finish. The second half of the album is where Middleton truly hits recline on the studio chair and lets his trademark melodies work their magic, though: Tracks like "Margherita" and "Moonbathing" are steeped in mood and purity throughout. *Brock Phillips*

ONUR ÖZER

KASMIR

Vakant/GER/CD

For someone claiming to have no formal musical training, Turkish techno magus Onur Özer sure creates a sophisticated brand of dance music. Much like Berlin-via-Seattle producer Bruno Pronsato, Özer lays avant-jazz and *musique concrète* ideas over subliminally propulsive 4/4 beats. The seemingly incongruous juxtaposition of highbrow elements with hedonistic dance tropes generates a fresh variation on techno's overly familiar template. Özer is essentially ushering into techno sounds rarely, if ever, heard there. On this stunning debut album, he makes unlikely components—oddly diminished piano chords, baroque organ fugues, perverse percussion accents—coalesce into smoothly running compositions that never seem gratuitously fussy or weird. Anyone bemoaning techno's stagnancy needs to hear *Kasmir*, a decidedly more-is-more affair. *Dave Segal*

ORGONE

THE KILLION FLOOR

Ubiquity/US/CD

Sounding much like a cross between The Dap-Kings and Breakestra (with whom they share several members), L.A.'s Orgone keeps the hotness of the recent retro-soul revival coming; lead singer Fanny Franklin fits in very nicely between Sharon Jones and Amy Winehouse. As befits the band's name, Orgone's sound is quite organic, rooted in soul, funk, boogaloo, and jazz, with a classic appeal that's nevertheless contemporary. Covers of "Funky Nassau," "Do Your Thing," and "I Get Lifted" serve as touchstones for originals like "Sophisticated Honky" and "Dialed Up"; basically, the entire album is one non-stop groove. If smooth, soulful funk with jazzy arrangements makes you sweat, you just found your new favorite band. *Eric K. Arnold*

EDDIE PALMIERI

MOLASSES

Fania/US/CD

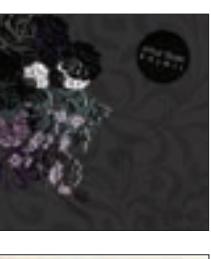
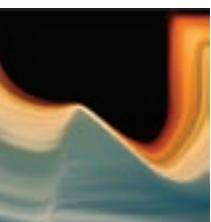
A Puerto Rican piano prodigy, Eddie Palmieri melded his own performance style (influenced by both Thelonious Monk and McCoy Tyner) and Latin musical roots to great effect. The compositions on *Molasses*, originally released in 1967 during an upswing in Palmieri's career, were purportedly inspired by dancers; as such, they're anything but sluggish and bogged down. A seemingly unlikely pairing of trombones and flutes, a common Palmieri arrangement, provides varied melodies, supported by a bedrock rhythm section and Palmieri's own intense piano lines and powerful chords. *Patrick Sisson*

PINCH

UNDERWATER DANCEHALL

Tectonic/UK/CD

Since the world heard the near-perfect "Qawwali" (re-imagined here as "Brighter Day" with vocals from Juakali) it's been waiting for Bristol dubstep king Pinch's full-length, and with *Underwater Dancehall* he delivers in spades. Pinch's layered production soars on tracks like the shuffle-bump of "Get Up," the tumbling percussion of "Lazarus," and the epic "Angels in the Rain," which features Indi Khur's vocals. While occasionally the vocalists risk smothering the tracks' intricacies, more often than not they support Pinch's echoed snares, bubbling basslines, and scattershot, world-traveled sounds (for instrumental fans, check the bonus vocal-free versions disc). This is The Wild Bunch updated for '08, with Pinch keeping the dancehall live. *Matt Earp*



NICKY CLICK

I'M ON MY CELL PHONE

Crunk Not Dead/US/CD

Four songs in, in her best valley-girl-meets-'80s-club-diva voice, Nicky Click gets straight to the point: "Who here likes ice cream?" It takes a unique sort of sweet tooth to handle *I'm on My Cell Phone*, otherwise, this melts faster than soft-serve on a car radiator. *Cell Phone* plays out like the "Kool Thing" Kim Gordon/Chuck D exchange stretched to 15 songs; it's composed of dialogues between Click and a deep-voiced "Mr. Owl," and one-sided talks between her and her "diary." Topics range from the titular phone ("I got a brand new ring tone" / "And you're on permanent roam") to queer politics ("I'm gonna stay away from them/Their pleasure is much too intriguing") to twee-indie love screeds, though the corny-as-hell production—bubblegum electro-pop and early-days hip-hop, mostly—makes *The Blow* sound groundbreaking. *Michael Byrne*


PLURAMON
THE MONSTROUS SURPLUS

Karaoke Kalk/GER/CD

What's so scary about Pluramon's fifth album, *The Monstrous Surplus*? The group, fronted by Marcus Schmickler, trades in melodic, gossamer indie pop tunes with heavenly vocals from Julie Cruise, Julia Hummer, and Jutta Koether. Echoes of Mazzy Star drift through wistful numbers like "Can't Disappear" and "If Time Was on My Side," which simmer sweetly rather than explode with wanton noise. These reserved motifs make *Surplus* a compelling listen, with Schmickler's electronic programming a fitting accent to his traditional band gear. The mix comes together on "Snow Bow," where Cruise coos, "A spell has been cast/There's no way to resist," as Schmickler's guitars swirl and swoon around her pristine pipes. This monster is scary-good! *Tomas Palermo*


RAFTER
SEX DEATH CASSETTE

Asthmatic Kitty/US/CD

As a longtime producer, solo artist, and member of Sufjan Steven's entourage, Rafter Roberts has kept a pretty low profile. *Sex Death Cassette*, his second solo record, will hopefully change this. Blanketing weird-pop gems in a wash of hazy production, *Sex Death Cassette* brings to mind summer vacations and afternoon naps. At 35 minutes, the record's 19 tracks twist and turn between heartfelt serenades ("I Love You Most of All"), fuzzed-out pseudo-reggae ("LoveTimeNowPlease"), and progressive indie rock ("Chances"). Despite its disparity of genre, however, the songs are all united by Rafter's incredible production skills, which alone are worth the price. *Josiah Hughes*


MARBERT ROCEL
SPEED EMOTIONS

Compost/GER/CD

Marbert Rocel sounds like one person, but three people actually make up the moniker: Marcel Aue produces, DJs, and mixes; Robert Krause produces, DJs, and makes visual art; and Antje Sefarth contributes cool and collected vocals. Still, from the first few seconds of Marbert Rocel's eclectic debut album, it's clear the trio isn't interested in conventional paths. The disc is a sunny, laid-back blend of disco, downtempo, pop, jazz, and more—none of it easily classifiable, all of it easily enjoyed. Of course, many of these tracks might prove difficult to fit into sets (and certainly wouldn't work for peak time on the floor), but their delectable quirkiness makes them worthy of repeat listens. *Luciana Lopez*


I-WAYNE
BOOK OF LIFE

VP/US/CD

I-Wayne is reggae's James Dobson. The falsetto singer born Cliffroy Taylor chants the same conservative, evangelical rhetoric as the Focus on the Family founder, albeit Taylor does so from a Rastafarian perspective. Taylor doesn't shy away from Biblical chastisements on his second album, *Book of Life*, which follows his successful '05 debut, *Lava Ground*, where he sang tunes that railed against poverty, crime, and abortion. Still, the subject matter doesn't diminish Taylor's position as one of Jamaica's most original voices since Garnett Silk, blending Ijahman Levi's gentle mystic presence with the vocal fire of The Congos' Cedric Myton. *Book of Life*'s R&B and Latin accents make it more musically adventurous than *Lava Ground*, but it's the rocksteady-inspired love ode "Good Enough" that shines brightest. With more than half of its 16 chapters worth hearing, I-Wayne is becoming one of reggae's most authentic authors. *Tomas Palermo*

ANDREA SARTORI
IL TAGLIACODE

Persona/GER/CD

Andrea Sartori (a.k.a. DeepAlso) helped found the Homework festival and associated label in Italy in 2002, an experience that perhaps influenced this album: The disc was assembled from live performances recorded at a jazz musician's retreat. The tracks are crunchy, skittery, and buzzy—geared toward jazz's sonic wandering and its tendency to absorb the world and spit it back out, transformed. The whole, however, is anchored by the percussion, which draws far more from the rhythmic regularity of techno than the fantastic explorations of jazz. The album teeters between pretentious and vital, never entirely convincing one way or the other. *Luciana Lopez*

SMIF-N-WESSUN
THE ALBUM

Duck Down/US/CD

To create their fourth album, MCs Tek and Steele temporarily left the Chicago borough of Bucktown behind and traveled up to Sweden. The resulting product is the duo's most surprising release since their '95 debut—surprising mostly because these gun-clapping rappers have never gotten as personal as they do on tracks like the somber, youthful remembrance "Trouble." But *The Album* at times awkwardly stands apart from previous efforts due to its mixed bag of beats (courtesy of Northern Europe's Ken Ring, Tommy Tee, and others), which range from catchy and disco-esque to downright dreary. More than ever, Tek and Steele have something significant to say, but the inconsistent production doesn't help relay their message. *Max Herman*

SUN
I'LL BE THE SAME

Staubgold/GER/CD

This record's title almost says it all as *I'll Be the Same* finds the Australian post-rock duo retreating to old motifs. But their lazy, Sunday-afternoon ballads are more alive this time around. Chris Townend is at his best when he barely enunciates, giving his lyrics an odd, ghostly presence. That effect colors the haze of his and Oren Ambarchi's guitar chords and sleepwalking beats on "Mosquito," and the rickety string noises on "Help Yourself." However, Townend takes a sinister turn on "Smile," where he sings "smile, little children" in a tone that would send most rugrats to the psychiatrist's couch. *Cameron Macdonald*

SUPERSILENT
8

Rune Grammofon/NOR/CD

The first minute and a half of Supersilent's *8* is almost just that—super-silent. You'll find yourself twiddling the volume knob—particularly if you've just come from the Norwegian crew's blissed-out, Eno-esque *6* (it was a DVD)—until the 10-minute mark hits and the low synth flutters have, almost imperceptibly, morphed into doom-metal sludge. Everything becomes much too loud, and then, on "2," the sludge thins to a trickle: seven minutes of faint electronic warbles. As *8*'s numbers climb—tracks here are labeled as ascending numerals—the pattern repeats, alternating between the spare and hushed and the cacophonous, with the sounds—from electronic chirps to operatic vocals to guitar thrash—becoming odder at every step. Lovely, ecstatic, and confounding. *Michael Byrne*

THE ABYSSINIANS
SATTA MASSAGANA [DELUXE EDITION]

Heartbeat/US/CD

Recorded in 1976, this classic reggae album truly stands the test of time. (The three-part harmonies of Bernard Collins, Donald Manning, and Lynford Manning helped define what "classic" reggae was in the first place.) The accompanying musicians, including Robbie Shakespeare and Horsemouth Wallace, provide a lesson in Jamaican folklore. While the title track became biblical in the Rasta world—a dreamlike ode to the roots of black spirituality—there is plenty here to reminisce and recline to. The two previously unreleased extended mixes of "Abendigo" and "Poor Jason Whyte" are nice collector's items, but a bit unnecessary. The original always was, and will remain, enough to keep any mind occupied for hours. *Derek Beres*

CARIBOU andorra

MERGE
RECORDS


THE DRIFT
CEILING SKY

Temporary Residence/US/CD

This repurposed compilation of vinyl-only tracks and remixes by left-field San Francisco instrumentalists The Drift is either an excellent appetizer or chaser to their singular effort *Noumena* (having to do with cognition). The band is also all about the mind, and their stark but jazzy atmospheres can send yours into a wonderland of chilled introspection. From the light strums of "Nozomi" to the arrhythmic bump of "Streets," it feels like Coltrane and Tortoise got together, got high, and got busy on the groove. Four Tet's kinetic remix of *Noumena*'s "Gardening, Not Architecture" jacks up the pulse and, along with Sybarite's space-funk slice-and-diced "Invisible Cities," positions The Drift as one of the most fertile sonic gardens around. *Scott Thill*


THE DYNAMICS
VERSION EXCURSION

Grove Attack/GER/CD

Combine a multinational trio of vocalists, a visionary French producer, an American dubmaster, and a handful of timeless, iconic tunes from the '50s to the '90s, and you have a recipe for brilliance. It's hard to argue with a tracklist that connects Led Zep, the Stones, Dylan, Elvis, and the White Stripes with Cymande, Pharaoh Sanders, Wilson Pickett, Herbie Hancock, and Prince. Producer Patchworks' inspired arrangements traipse through rock, soul, jazz and funk territory with a Studio One-meets-Stax vibe, as "Whole Lotta Love"



Photo by Thorsten Kohlhaus

DOMINIK EULBERG**BIONIK**

Cocoon/GER/CD

When it comes time for the inevitable renovation of the now-unwieldy beast known as "minimal techno," there is likely to be found a Dominik Eulberg cornerstone branded "ketaminimal." And deep within this resonant vault there'll be a Pandora's box constructed from dovetail joints and striated detailing. Open this can of wormholes and you'll find a third full-length, following less than a year after *Heimische Gefilde*, which was a biomechanical meditation on field studies. *Bionik*, meanwhile, burbles less from the natural tributaries and more from oscillating sine waves and metastasized trance cells. In line with the early Black Dog productions updated through Alex Smoke, the 10 increasingly clubby, clanking tracks on this album (none related to Eulberg's previously released single also titled "Bionik") offer up malleable body mechanics, viscous melodies, and glassy pads. *Tony Ware*

transforms from arena-rock cliché to lovers-rock anthem, "Rockit" goes ska, and "Seven Nation Army" employs dubwise elements. Without missing a beat, *Version Excursion* easily travels from discotheque to boudoir. *Eric K. Arnold*

THE FOUR MINTS
GENTLY DOWN YOUR STREAM

Asterisk/US/CD

Most soul music from the 1960s and '70s was determinedly single-oriented. Small labels issued one or two cuts by an artist, and, barring that almost-unheard-of hit, moved on callously to the next cat or kitten. When albums did come out, they were often collections by proven hit makers, not relatively unknown wonders from Columbus, Ohio, like The Four Mints. It all makes *Gently Down Your Stream*, the Mints' near-perfect 1973 LP, more remarkable and its re-release (finally!) by The Numero Group's new album-oriented imprint, Asterisk, more exciting. With some of the greatest crooners ("Row My Boat") and dancers ("Keep on Loving You") ever recorded, *Gently* is that great anomaly: A must-have soul album. *Justin Hopper*

THE DYNAMICS
BASED BOYS

Jive/US/CD

This fresh-faced foursome straight outta South Berkeley scored one of the most memorable hip-hop singles last year with "Vans," which detailed their love for a certain canvas skate shoe. On their debut album, they try to show that that was no fluke. *Based Boys* sounds just like you'd expect: loud, confident, and utterly stupid. Producer Young L's deceptively simplistic style tips its Oakland A's cap to hyphy and crunk, yet stands on its own merits. Rappers Uno, Lil B, and Stunna trade tag-team verses about cars, girls, and looking fly; hooky choruses abound; the bass drops l-o-w. Sure, it's teeny-hop, but when was the last time you heard a hip-hop album that was all about having fun? *Eric K. Arnold*

THE VALERIE PROJECT
THE VALERIE PROJECT

Drag City/US/CD

The Valerie Project is the complex brainchild of Greg Weeks, best known for his work in Philadelphia psych-folk group Espers. With nine others, including electronic legend Charles Cohen, The Valerie Project set out to write and perform a new soundtrack to the 1970 Jaromil Jireš film *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders*. Recorded in eight days, the 30 tracks that comprise *The Valerie Project* demonstrate an otherworldly mysticism where electric guitar solos, fuzzy noise, and classical harps coalesce beautifully. At 74 minutes, the record's ambitions are strengthened by the fact that its compositions are so stunning, rendering *The Valerie Project* a success with or without the film. *Josiah Hughes*

VAN HUNT
POPULAR

Blue Note/US/CD

Neo-soul isn't exactly the newest flavor *du jour*. Still, singer-songwriter Van Hunt soldiers on with an album of stripped-down, guitar-based, intimate funk confessions reminiscent of both early Prince and Lenny Kravitz at his most brooding. *Popular* has its moments, like "Turn the TV On," which muses on mindless commercialism, and despite Van Hunt's penchant for booty-call-waiting lyrics, at least his sparse arrangements sidestep predictable R&B formulas. Doubtless there are some for whom choruses like "I wanna fuck you, baby!" will seem startlingly raw and direct, yet Van Hunt's oversexed and possibly over-obsessive personality makes you wonder if he isn't guilty of keeping it *too* real. *Eric K. Arnold*

WE CAN AND WE MUST
MAN ALIVE

indie/US/CD

Steve Reich's explorations of repetition and shattered phonemes continue to copy and paste through electronic music's history, influencing and looming over figures from the original analog technonauts to today's Logic jocks. *We Can and We Must* make no bones about their debt to Reich, guiding their two-man rig of hacked technology through five cutup journeys from the art house to the modern sample library. "Phooey" exposes raw audiotape to molten guitar, "Blow Up Gigue" lurches from Amon Tobin-ish piano cuts to loopy, '70s atmospherics and Funkadelic guitar, and "Anthem" wraps it up in an endless analog synthesizer freak-out. Chase the freak loops with a DVD of inventively trippy low-budget videos and repeat, tweak, repeat. *Rob Geary*

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FABRIC RECORDS

SINCE 2001



Craig Richards / James Lavelle / Terry Francis / Ali B / Jon Marsh / DJ Hype / Tony Humphries / Deadly Avenger / Pure Science / Howie B / Tyler Stadius / Grooverider / Hipp-e And Halo / John Peel / Radioactive Man / Plump DJs / Slam / Jacques Lu Cont / Doc Martin / Fabio / Swazyak Bent / The Amalgamation Of Soundz / Bugz In The Attic / Michael Mayer / J Majik / Stacey Pullen / DJ Spinbad / Tyrant / Nitin Sawhney / Eddie Richards / Adam Freeland / Akufen / AIM / Baby Mammoth, Beige & Solid Doctor / Andy C & DJ Hype / Andrew Weatherall / The Freestylers / John Digweed / Joe Ransom / DJ Heather / Meat Katie / Adam Beyer / Scratch Perverts / Ivan Smagghe / Death In Vegas / Rob da Bank / Diplo / Carl Craig / High Contrast / Global Communication / The Herbaliser / Matthew Dear as Audion / DJ Format / Wiggle / Evil Nine / Tiefschwarz / Cut Copy / Rub-N-Tug / Stanton Warriors / Marco Carola / The Glimmers / Luke Slater / Tayo / Ralph Lawson / Spank Rock / Ellen Allien / Krafty Kuts / Ewan Pearson / Marcus Intalex / Ricardo Villalobos / James Murphy & Pat Mahoney / Steve Bug / Caspa & Rusko

Comp Reviews 1.08



GERMAN FOLKTRONICS STALWART
MORR MUSIC SERVES UP SOME
LESSER-HEARD GEMS.

A NUMBER OF SMALL THINGS:
A COLLECTION OF MORR MUSIC
SINGLES FROM 2001-2007

Morr/GER/CD

Long interested in blurring the contours of rock and electronic sounds, Germany's Morr Music label has, for a decade and a half, embraced a mixed sonic heritage: shoegaze-y references to Slowdive, My Bloody Valentine, and the ethereal washes of the 4AD label are the most obvious; other influences emerge from indie rock, melodic pop, acoustic folk, and '60s psychedelia. Like Linus' blanket, Morr bands' electronics serve as the warm, comforting backdrop for all of these musical styles: angular techno hums gently in the background, letting ambient notes shimmer and sparkle amidst these hazy atmospheres. It's a rich, easy dreamscape to get lost in, and Morr's artists fluidly pick their way through texture and feeling.

A Number of Small Things: A Collection of Morr Music Singles From 2001-2007 shines with more indie-rock vibes than most electronica-infused compilations, distilling a mish-mash of genres down to the songwriting skills of some criminally overlooked artists. Electric President could easily be this compilation's breakout find for the novice Morr listener: "I'm Not the Lonely Son" is a brisk, funk-sliced rock anthem, poised for college-radio greatness. Other People's Children composes two love letters to '80s synth pop: "On a Clear Day" could be a lost track from new wave one-hitters The Ocean Blue, and "Suicide Common" nestles Jason Sweeney's forlorn vocals tightly under ambient's dreamy wool. *Small Things* celebrates the Morr approach, where artists bow to mood in order to shape their stirring pieces, which are less about sturdy electronic beats and more about how rock compositions can utilize electronic textures as instrumentation.

Some of Morr's most compelling collections have been homages specifically to the '90s shoegaze sound. The essential 2002 double-CD *Blue Skied An' Clear* offered Slowdive covers and other nods by electronic heavies such as Ulrich Schnauss, and *Small Things* continues Morr's love affair with the now-defunct band. Slowdive drummer Simon Scott teams up with

Isan's Antony Ryan as Seavault, contributing some of *Small Things*' most pop-centered pieces. Lush guitars and catchy melodies alight "The Mercy Seat," and "I Could Be Happy" (a cover of '80s band Altered Images) strums through luminescent beats with breathy vocals and long waves of melancholy regret.

Morr fans will appreciate the appearance of longtime faves like Lali Puna: like fellow Morr vet Styrofoam, they add a touch of techno texture to this comp. "Nin-Comp-Pop" shows Puna's penchant for juxtaposition, laying singer Valerie Trebeljahr's ghostly cadences alongside Markus Acher's coarse beats and bleeps. In homage to French composer Erik Satie, longtime Morr staples Isan drop a light synth rendition of Satie's famous "Trois Gymnopédies," making these clear, melodic tunes from the 1800s sound modern in this ensemble.

There's a cinematic quality to *Small Things* that springs from these songs' roomy capacity for carrying nostalgia and a general air of languidness. Like a film score, rhythm and pacing frames each of these cuts; what renders them so romantic is a shy, wistful quality. On "Saturday Night," Masha Qrella's vocals sound all the more fragile when catching over acoustic guitar notes and spare drum beats. When she croons, "Take me to those places/That I've never seen/It might make me/That person that I've never been," you feel her prickly mix of defiance and longing. The Morr universe might be prettier than real life, but it's ultimately a reclusive one—where music, steady and unhurried, becomes the friend you've always wanted. *Janet Tzou*



REVIEWS ALBUMS

STEVE AOKI: PILLOWFACE AND HIS AIRPLANE CHRONICLES

Ultra/US/CD

As DJ of the celebs and a CobraSnake fixture, Steve Aoki is often discredited as an over-hyped hipster. Fortunately *Pillowface and His Airplane Chronicles*, his debut mix, mostly ditches the glitz for a quality listen of fun and danceable remixes. As an homage to his hardcore roots, the disc opens with Refused's "New Noise," which blends seamlessly into a re-edit of Justice's "Waters of Nazareth" featuring Pase Rock. The mix progressively blends genres, with remixes of Bloc Party, Franz Ferdinand, and others featuring new verses from Amanda Blank, Kid Sister, and Hot Hot Heat's Steve Bays. If you can curb your hipster phobias, *Pillowface and His Airplane Chronicles* is good times. *Josiah Hughes*

BOX OF DUB 2: DUBSTEP AND FUTURE DUB

Soul Jazz/UK/CD

Soul Jazz hasn't built its reputation by playing it safe, and *Box of Dub 2* is a wonderfully challenging follow-up to *Box of Dub*. Ramadamman's "Every Next Day" and Kode9's "Stung" develop the often-neglected paranoid techno influence on dubstep, while Cotti's "Let Go Mi Shirt" (feat. Kingoin) jumps with manic dancehall energy. And though a few tried-and-true producers fall flat (both Digital Mystikz and Skream sound like they were phoning it in), Pinch absolutely kills it with two of his best cuts ever, the *wub*-ulous "Step 2 It," which features the fabulous Rudie Lee, and the electric "Chamber." Nice stuff for heads and newcomers alike. *Matt Earp*

CADENZA CONTEMPORARY 0.1 & CADENZA CLASSICS

Cadenza/GER/2CD

Berlin continues to deliver the finest in contemporary minimalism, and at the hands of Cadenza label head Luciano, only the ripest releases are picked. This compilation, Cadenza's first CD release, is a collection of previously released and unreleased hits, in both standalone and mixed forms. Luciano's mix starts things along the quirker tip with his own "Toneres," and moves on to the liquid-fused house sounds of Argentinian Brito and Digitaline. Building the crescendo, Rhadoo and Petre Inspirescu build up the percussion while displaying frame after frame of diverse, psychedelic, stuttery edits. With full versions of some of the classic releases from Pier Bucci, Quenum, and Lee Van Dowski, this release is a real treat for any true techno fan. *Praxis*

FABRICLIVE 36: JAMES MURPHY & PAT MAHONEY

Fabriclive/UK/CD

The New Garage revival's signs were everywhere: Environ Records' *Unclassics* series of Italo-disco and Metro Area's DJ sets; the rise of interest in Larry Levan and proto-electro, Mudd Club, and Paradise Garage. Add to that mixture what seems to be a new love for London's jazz-funk scene and its descendants, and you've got the new face of James Murphy and Pat Mahoney, DFA Records' biz men and the latest *Fabriclive* perps. Baby Oliver and LCD are obvious choices, but when did GQ and Was (Not Was) become hip for the dance-punk set? No complaints here: If this is the new sound of New York's retro-hipsters, maybe it's time to load some cash onto the old MetroCard. *Justin Hopper*

POP AMBIENT 2008

Kompakt/GER/CD

It's that time of year again and how blissfully happy it makes me! The joy in the latest installment in Kompakt's legendary ambient series comes not from isolated moments or even specific tracks but from its lovingly sequenced whole; from an absorbing, overarching sense of coherence and consistency. Flawlessly framing contributions from Wolfgang Voigt (as Alli), Jorg Burger (as Triola), Andrew Thomas, Thomas Fehlmann, Ulf Lohmann, Klimek, Popnoname, DJ Koze, and The Field, with a pair of recordings from Markus Guentner, *Pop Ambient 2008* sounds perfectly poised. Deployed immaculately throughout, contemporary ambient's usual tropes become utterly engrossing. Happy New Year. *David Hemingway*

SPACE & TIME

Hotflush/UK/CD

Paul Rose's London-based Hotflush Recordings can rightfully claim to be one of dubstep's most consistent and distinctive labels within a genre full of copycats. Like Metalheadz and Mo' Wax before it, Hotflush captures urban London's dark emotions, complex melodies, and gut-wobbling bass inclinations. *Space & Time* keenly showcases the imprint's unique roster, which includes Rose's subby, intergalactic Scuba productions, Israeli/German collective Jazzsteppa's live dub riffs, and Californian Vaccine's vocal-tinted tracks. Hotflush artists daringly explore broad sonic textures, from Intext System's blend of 808 drum rhythms and ambient sensuality to Elemental's sharp snare manipulation and tech-y touches. *Space & Time* sees Hotflush about to boil. *Tomas Palermo*

SURGEON: THIS IS FOR YOU SHITS

Warp/UK/CD

The title is lifted from an on-stage Suicide rant, so you know Surgeon's limited-edition *This Is For You Shits* will pull no punches. The track selection is equally caustic—from the asthmatic wheeze of Aphex Twin's "Ventolin" to Whitehouse's sadistic "Dumping the Fucking Rubbish," Surgeon does a masterful job of balancing elements of tension and release throughout the course of an hour-long set. Miss out on the limited 1000-copy run of this one? Seek out other sets he's released online—"For Dog Faces Only" and "Neck Face" are equally worthy. While he may have cut his teeth as a minimal techno producer, "maximal" is now a more appropriate tag for Surgeon's uncompromising approach to blending sound. *Brock Phillips*



SURGEON :
THIS IS
FOR YOU
SHITS



DINKY: GET LOST 3

Crosstown Rebels/UK/CD

Like the wandering eyes in a portrait that creep out Shaggy and Scooby Doo as they retreat down a long, dusty corridor, there's something at times both spooky and spastic about the best of what is today termed "minimal house." This 19-track mix is like that slightly unnerving piece of art—yet another case in moody point...illism. An amalgamation helmed by Alejandra "Dinky" Iglesias—a Berlin-based DJ/producer associated with the Chilean diaspora that has maximized minimal house—this CD is one of those collections that manages to make sumptuous shadowboxing into a full-contact sport. Jacking into production work by Matt John, Peace Division, Ricardo Villalobos, Matt O'Brien, Radio Slave, Isolée, Matthew Styles, and herself, Dinky straddles the stereo field without constricting it, gradually reconciling the fricative gradients between deep house's funky slink and techno's calcified plinks. *Tony Ware*



Broken Business

By Peter Nicholson

FUTURE JAZZ AND BUSTED BEATS



While this column's directive has always been to cover the future jazz and broken good good, as long as it ain't an album, sometimes I have to stretch the parameters of my mission. Such is the case with *Future Soul Sessions Vol. 1* (Bagpak). Compiled and mixed by Elevations Radio don **Ernesto Vigo**, who broadcasts the best in bruk on a weekly basis for Harlem's 90.3 FM WHCR radio, this mix is easily the finest compilation in ages, with all sorts of crazy exclusives and essentials from the likes of **Yellowtail**, **Maddslinky**, and **Chamade Beat** feat. **Mpho Skeef**. To keep us ahead of the curve, Ernesto was kind enough to share some of his upcoming heat and give us a peek inside his crates.

"My number one track has to be 'Claim' (Bagpak/Raw Fusion), a hot soulful number from Harlem's own **Arch Typ** that features the vocals of **Paul Randolph**, combining futuristic jazzy chords with enough dancefloor bass-driven rhythm to get any party jumpin!" he reports. "I'm also hot about 'Voodoo Magic' on DMS Country/2000 Black, where Harlem's mighty **Probe DMS** delivers a dancefloor bouncer and manhandles the mic, swaying you back and forth lyrically, and making you groove from side to side, with a rich percussive sound and guitar riff chorus that keeps this track rockin' to the very last note."

"Last but definitely not least, there's 'After the Dance' (Bugz in the Attic Remix) from **Simbad** (Raw Fusion/Bitasweet)," Vigo writes. "The multi-talented DJ/producer gets a fine remix from the 'masters of bruk'—**Bugz in the Attic's** **Mark Force** and **Kaidi Tatham**—on this Marvin Gaye-inspired, soul-infused track featuring the vocals of Melo. He delivers one of the baddest beats around... This is sure to be a bruk anthem for 2008." Big ups to Ernesto for sharing the wealth!

All the way on the other side of the globe, Japan's always-reliable Especial Records brings us the latest from **Lady Alma**, "Pressure." Featuring two mixes by New Zealand's finest **Universal Sun** (a.k.a. **Mark de Clive-Lowe** and **Chris Cox**), it's



Basic Needs

By Kid Kameleon

LOW-END NECESSITIES, FROM RAGGA TO DUBSTEP AND BEYOND



Nothing makes me feel better about the state of dance music at the moment than the continued strength of the Baltimore Club scene/sound. In the '90s you had originators like **DJ Scottie B** (Unruly Records) and **Rod Lee** (Club Kings) creating lo-fi, high-energy shuffle jams in and around B-More. Then, by the early '00s, the sound had spread as far as Philly, and **Diplo** and **Tittsworth** were turning out remixes left and right. Now the sound has gone national and an awesome new generation of American producers has stepped up. **Dave Nada** is one of them. A new name to me—though he has apparently been holding it down in Baltimore/DC for years—Nada's *Kick Out the Jams* EP on Tittsworth's T&A label is smoking! It's truly over-the-top, with manic redos/mashes of MC5, Biggie, and others. And you haven't lived 'til you've watched a room full of people bounce to Nada's remix of Queen's "Fat Bottom Girls." For more, visit www.davenada.com.

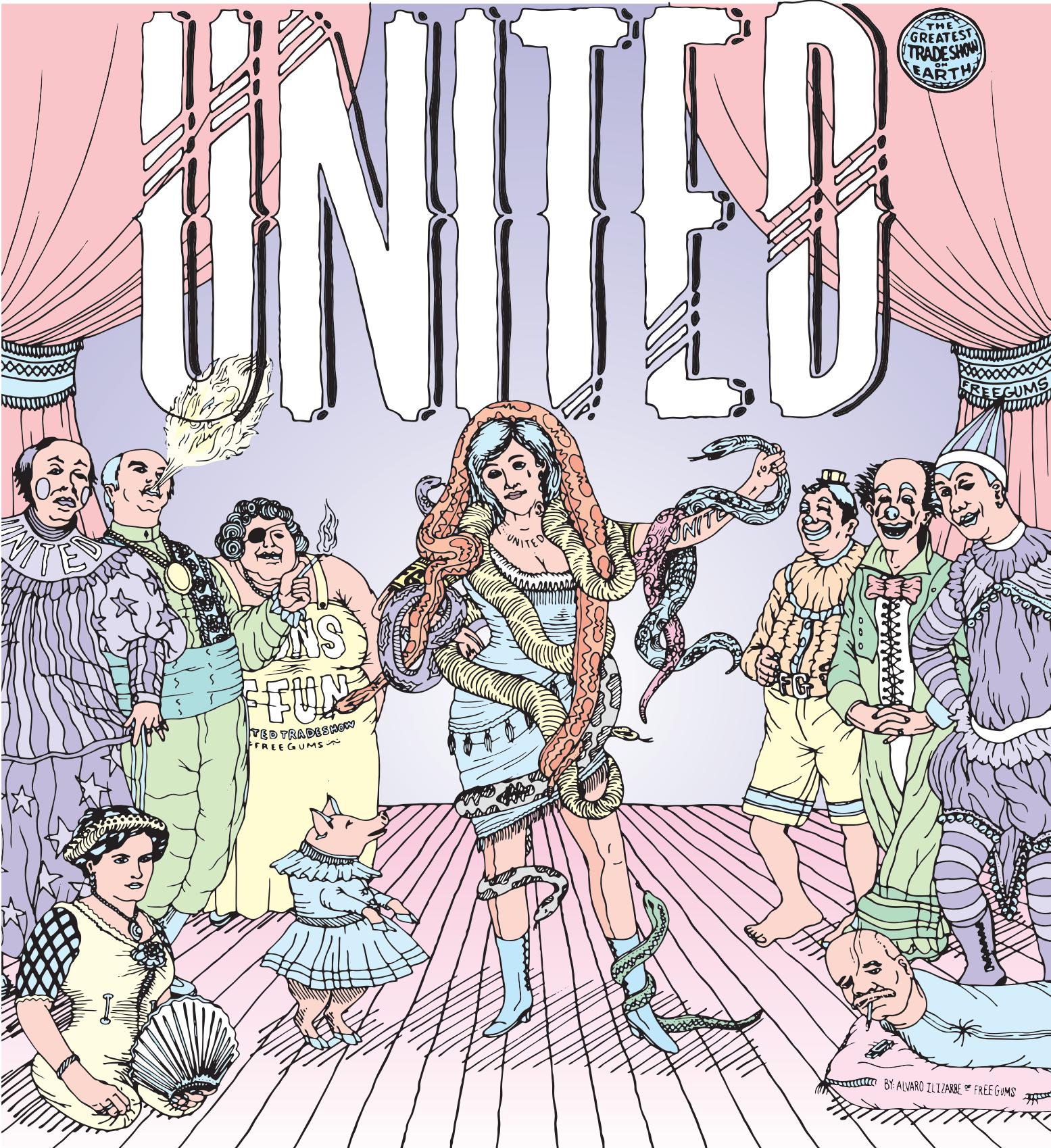
"If It Is Love" works real well with the very latest from **Reel People**, "Alibi" (Papa Records). The first single from their upcoming album, "Alibi" features some red-hot remixes from Sweden's **Rasmus Faber**, whose "RaFa Epic Dub" turns up the percussion and strings for a big dose of Latin soul featuring the vocals talents of newcomer **Darien**.

Gonna close things out by switching on the way-back machine, turning back the clock for just a minute... When was the first time you heard **SK Radicals**' "Reachin' for the Farside"? Was it '99 when it first dropped on People Records? Or '00, when **DJ Fluid** and **Patrick Forge** both put it on mix CDs? Whenever it was, you probably remember it, so listen up when I tell you SK Radicals have a new one coming (and an album, too, but shhh! this column's about singles!). "Troubled Times" is on Groovement, it's got Bugz in the Attic mixes, and it's massive—banging the squelched-out bass, dropping the sampled spoken-word science, and generally freaking the fuck out. Go gedit—or be sorry.

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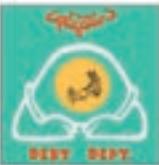
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Beach House *Devotion* CD/2LP/digital
Beach House have written eleven delicate pop tunes about love, feeling, and, of course, devotion. Their new album is a surefire antidote to the winter blues. Out February on Carpark.



Excepter *Debt Dept.* CD/2LP/digital
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En Tu Casa By Nick Thacona

HOUSEKEEPING, FROM TECH AND MINIMAL TO DEEP AND TRADITIONAL



Over the past few years, Germany's **Dirt Crew** has become as ubiquitous as speaker-crunching tech-house itself. When **Felix Eder** and **Peter Gijselers** first began working together, they were living in Berlin and Cologne respectively, making in-your-face electro. But when Gijselers finally moved east so that they could share a common studio, the duo's output became decidedly more sophisticated, and it's from that advanced tech-house palette that their recent full-length, *Raw*, on their own **Dirt Crew Recordings**, emerged. Along with the full disc of brand-new material, a bonus disc of selected remixes of artists such as **MANDY**, **2020 Soundsystem**, **Freestyle Man**, and **Marc Romboy** is included. If you're into the DC sound, look for the album's remix EP featuring a selection of tracks reworked by **Motor City Soul**, **Tom Clark**, and **Dos Santos**.

Thugfucker is another dynamic duo working in electrohouse's left field, also with matching artist and label names. Comprised of **Greg Oreck** and **Holmar Filipsson**, Thugfucker, like **Dirt Crew**, forgoes the burning sawtooth bass in favor of a more eclectic house sound, and the results are stunning. The boys will drop their freshman album, a variety of house and Italo sounds entitled *Full Length*, this year. The label's next release comes from their Brooklyn friend **Kalim Shabazz**. "Peak Bomb" is modern piano house at its best—deep yet driving. **Phonique** is on remix detail, with a percussive, Åme-esque re-rub that adds a bit of strings and ups the emotional ante.

François K is set to release his first solo effort in quite some time on his own Deep Space imprint. *Road of Life* is a slow-motion house odyssey, centered on a driving tribal rhythm with numerous bleeping synth lines that sound almost like early-'90s techno. Remix duties were bestowed upon K's frequent guests at Cielo's Deep Space night, **Quiet Village**, who kick the tempo up and add some *oomph* to the low end. More from the **François K** camp: **John Daly's** *Monsoon* EP (Wave Music), a collection of synth-driven house tracks with

touches of cosmic, dub, and Detroit soul scattered throughout.

Stepping away from his shop-owner duties at San Francisco's Tweekin Records, my production partner in **Hector Works**, **Anthony Mansfield**, has been a busy boy in the studio these days. With solo remixes on for **TJ Gorton's** "Club Cabana" (Deep Freeze), **Tal M. Klein's** "That Ain't No Mermaid" (Aniligital), and the forthcoming mix of **Free Blood's** "Never Hear Surf Music Again" (with **Ben Cook** as **Barfly**), the one affectionately known as "Garlic" is really proving his mettle in the funky-house arena. A force to be reckoned with.

Chicago's **Mazi Namvar** is teaming up with **Nathan Larsen** and **Kyle Szmurlo** as **Wow and Flutter** to present "Tape Replay" (Fresh Meat), an epic nine-minute journey in 21st-century house. Its initial sparseness makes it a perfect transition track, which then builds into a tripped-out world of traditional house drums and futuristic synths. The team of **Will Saul** and **Tam Cooper** nicely rework "Tape" into early morning tech-house bliss that recalls the original but takes on a life of its own.

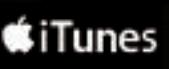
And last but not least, London's **Kerowack** is set to release its first multi-track effort as *The First* EP on Thunder Finger (a clean version of **Thugfucker?**). Tracks like "Fuck Guitars" and "Naf Monk" are squarely pointed at the younger dancefloor that likes its house noisy, distorted, and bleepy, while others like "Joolz" and "Keep it Movin'" featuring vocalist **Doc Brown** dipping in to keep things varied. If heavy-duty sound processing is your thing, then this is one record to check.

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House Guest Reviews: Lopazz

Stefan Eichinger may make house music, but his brand of four-on-the-floor is so varied that it uncommonly appeals to numerous tastes at once. And if a look at his MySpace page's influences is any indicator—he name-checks everyone from Ween and Neil Young to the Human League and Dr. Dre—you're likely to find some common ground with the music he makes as Lopazz, too; *Kook Kook*, his latest LP for Get Physical, traverses all ends of the house spectrum, taking turns through Italo and vocal synth pop while remaining true the beat. Catch Lopazz on the *Get Physical 5 Years* tour this month in Spain, Italy, his native Germany, and France, where he'll be playing any amount of his favorite tunes below. **Will Tobin**
www.lopazz.com

ALEX FLATNER & DEAFNY MOON

"THE VOICE PT. 2"

Circle Music/GER/12

This magic duo released a great 12" in 2007 with a fantastic *Spirit Catcher* remix, and now they return with the follow-up single to "The Voice." This one is pure erotic dance music, no "boys noize." Alex Flatner's Circle compilation is also great. It's on my MP3 player even when I'm on my way to the club! **Lopazz**

DUBFIRE

"I FEEL SPEED"

SCI+TEC/US/12

I definitely prefer this record's Audion Remix to the original. I like the part when the tempo goes down and the track starts over again. It's weird but it's not stupid pling-plang-wulla-wulla-bing-bang music; it's a refreshing tool for a long night! You'll dance and smile, I promise! **Lopazz**

RAZ OHARA

"KISSES"

Get Physical/GER/12

The *Pantha du Prince* remix here is a moody and pretty tune; a good single to start the night with if you're feeling love in the dark with a drink at the bar and have taken some early steps on the dancefloor. The last track on the "Kisses" single is called "Party Is Over." A perfect start to the end of the night, right? **Lopazz**

SLAM

"AZURE"

Soma/UK/12

"Azure" reminds me of an old track whose name I've forgotten. It's got great harmonies and melodies, like a tune that opens your heart. The *Radioslave* remix features great *Radioslave* production, and there's not much more to say than that. Awesome. **Lopazz**

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After Silence
By Martin De Leon

THE OUTER ORBITS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC



Born Ruffians (photo by Tim Saccani)



Artif Shore



Jesu (photo by Tina Korhonen)

Pops once told me that tomorrow is a loud place. With each year that passes, I get giddy about the new stuff producers, bands, and DJs will offer. Is it possible to be nostalgic for the future?

Either way, Baltimore producer **Cex** knows how to start the year off right. His *Exotical Privates EP* (Automation) is all remixes from his last record, the awesomely titled *Actual Fucking*. Owls hoot over crisp guitars and prickly beats on "Bolton Hill," and "Hamilton" finds Cex settling down with twangy guitars to make a melancholic dancefloor in your headphones. These are some of Cex's best songs in a long time.

More to look forward to this year is L.A. eccentric **Ariel Pink**'s new album for Paw Tracks, which he's currently recording. But for now, check out his kindred spirits and Tiny Creatures labelmates **Softboiled Eggies**. The L.A. duo's new record, *Upset That Rhythm*, finds singer Janet Kim's timeless, whispery voice overlapping with '60s rock.

But the '60s are dead, *man*. England killed them with **Black Rabbit**'s brilliant throwback 12" entitled "Musky Peas" (Tigerbass). With a heart full of nostalgia for early rave, Brighton's **Guy Appleton** just drops nutso beats. "1992" says it all, where fluttering pianos cut into head-busting breaks. The rest is history, say they.

Former *XLR8R* cover dudes **Battles** return with their *Tonto EP* (Warp), and even if you're not a Battles fan, you should still seek out the CD for the **Four Tet** remix alone. Murky synths run in circles until a beat drifts them into some of **Kieran Hebden**'s nicest remix work in a while. When you're done checking that, grab the dope new EP from **Tussle**, *Warning* (Smalltown Supersound), where the band takes a Talking Heads approach and gets remixed by **Hot Chip**, **Optimo**, and more.

Last year's "best venues to hear experimental music" bit was pretty well received, so I'll continue with Atlanta's **Drunken Unicorn**. In a city with an eight-lane highway and some of the best soul food anywhere, it's nice to see a charming hole-in-the-wall like the Unicorn. I like the disco curtain behind the stage and the mural artwork of the place, which makes it look like the inside of Shepard Fairey's brain. Won't you visit, please?

Minneapolis' avant-garde quartet **Artifact Shore** offers up a solid, self-titled instrumental EP on Interference Shift that opens with seven minutes of pitter-patter thumps and laser synths akin to early Autechre. Elsewhere, it gets no happier but the group at least starts to use guitars, and should be recommended for its new-wave ethos alone. Those Minnesota winters can be tough.

British post-doom players **Jesu** (mostly the work of Godflesh's Justin K. Broadrick) balance gloom with loud hope on their *Lifeline EP* (Hydra Head), which uses the lead track from last year's



Read the Label
By Jesse "Orosco" Serwer

HIP-HOP MIXTAPES, WHITE LABELS, AND SHIT



J Dilla



Esoteric

brilliant record of the same name. Guitars get grumpy under Eno-esque singing and scruffy beats ("You Wear Their Masks") that only get better ("End of the Road") before closing up this strong EP.

Summer can seem like nothing but a distant memory at this time of year, but slap **Pete Rock**'s "We Roll" (Nature Sounds) on your slipmat and you can almost feel the ocean breeze. It's no lyrical tour de force but the unlikely combo of **Jim Jones**, Dipset hook master **Max B.**, and Pete himself gel nicely over a wildy original flip of that crazy synth work from Kool and the Gang's "Summer Madness." Mediocre b-side "Til I Retire" notwithstanding, I'm expecting big things from the Chocolate Boy Wonder's upcoming *NY's Finest* LP on the strength of "We Roll."

Brooklyn band **33Hz** is kind of like a less-cheeky Chromeo, so it took a little Googling to confirm that they're the same 33Hz responsible for "Paris, Texas" (Dither Down), an impossibly catchy **Devin the Dude**- and **Teki Latex**-laced pop tune that hit my mailbox a little while back. While the plethora of remixes from **Architecture in Helsinki** and **In Flagranti**, among others) on the CDEP are totally unnecessary, props to 33Hz for having the foresight to pair these two lovable goofballs together.

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Equally offbeat is *Pterodactyl Tubeway*, Boston MC/producer **Esoteric**'s (of **7L & Esoteric** fame) soundclash with a gaggle of Gary Numan samples. The "make a full-length record sampling a single artist" thing was probably tired before it started, but *Pterodactyl*, a free bonus disc that comes with online orders of Esoteric's recently released *Egoclapper* LP, doesn't take itself seriously enough to warrant that sort of criticism. "Me, I Disconnect From Rap," with its hilarious rant about guestlist abuse, is probably the best track on either, meanwhile.

From **Peanut Butter Wolf**'s highly recommended *2K8: B-Ball Zombie Warcamp* comes "See (Suite)" b/w "Mash's Revenge" (Stones Throw) featuring the unsurprisingly strong debut of **Supreme Team** (a.k.a. **Madlib** and **Karriem Riggins**) on the a-side and **Guilty Simpson** and **MF Doom** wrecking one of **J Dilla**'s *Donuts* jams on the flip. Guilty has been all over the place recently; with his debut LP, *Ode to the Ghetto*, set to drop shortly, the

DJ Rhettmatic-mixed *Stray Bullets* collects nearly all of the Detroit MC's existing appearances along with a few LP previews. Watch out.

Guilty's and Dilla's Detroit homey **Black Milk** is also doing big things, linking with Cali rapper **Bishop Lamont** for the straight-to-the-internet street album *CalTroiT*. With guest appearances from **Dr. Dre** (a glorified drop), **Busta Rhymes** (two tracks!), **Ras Kass**, and, oddest of all, **Lady of Rage**, this isn't your run-of-the-mill internet album. Despite the aforementioned names, it's **Indef**, an unknown rapper from L.A. whose raspy delivery recalls a young Ras Kass, who offers the strongest cameo (on title track "Caltriot").

While his *The Growth* LP is now a 100-percent-official casualty of development hell, long-M.I.A. mixtape king **Joe Budden** has been making up for lost time since being granted a release from his Def Jam contract last fall. A complete version was not yet available at press time, but leaked tracks from Budden's *Mood Muzik 3: It's About to Get Worse* like "5th Gear" and "Star Inside of Me" suggest that the much-anticipated mixtape could be even stronger than its highly praised predecessors in the *Mood Muzik* series. Somewhere, **Jay-Z** is unimpressed.



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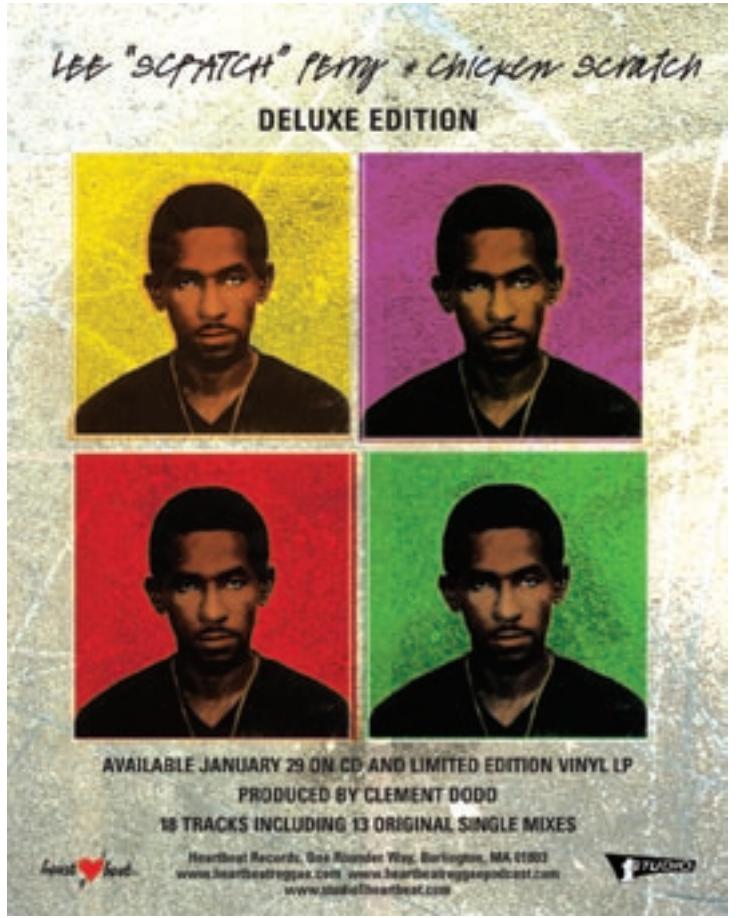
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IN STORES FEBRUARY 12



REVIEWS COLUMNS



Reggae Rewind By Ross Hogg

THE HEARSAY AND DOWNLOW ON DANCEHALL,
DUB, ROOTS, AND LOVERS ROCK



They grow up so fast.... When **QQ** was but 11 years young, he dropped "Poverty," a beautiful, plaintive tune on the Spiritual War riddim. Fast-forward two years to the present and he now has another big record, "Screechy," a dance tune that follows up on the success of last year's "Stookie." One of the most noteworthy aspects of "Screechy" is that it heralds the arrival of QQ's newly deepened voice (thanks, puberty!), which he employs to instruct listeners on how to do the title dance. The song's soca-esque riddim, Set Up, also has hot tunes from **Vybz Kartel** and **Charlie Blacks**.

The Water House Riddim (Jam 2) picks up where **Sean Kingston** left off. If "Stand By Me" could be used as the base for Kingston's "Beautiful Girls," then why not try the waters with "Duke of Earl"? **Gyptian** pens another ode to the ladies with "African Girl," but **Wayne Marshall** and **Elephant Man** move quickly into slack territory with "Long Story" and "Juk A Gal," respectively. Elephant Man scores extra genius points (or cringe points, depending on who's listening) for not only singing "Juk A Gal" over "Duke of Earl," but also interpolating the melody from Peabo Bryson and Roberta Flack's "Tonight I Celebrate My Love." (Admit it: You never thought you'd see those two names in this column. I know I didn't.)

Stephen "The Genius" McGregor shows no signs of slowing down. His new Bee Hive riddim is a driving track with rough and raw offerings from Elephant Man, **Lady Saw**, **Assassin**, **Chino**, and **Beenie Man**, whose "No No" is another in a long line of anti-oral-sex tunes.

Beenie also has a song out that has an excellent chance of being one of his biggest singles in years: "Whine Gal." It has a mid-1990s feel to it, but with Beenie's up-to-the-time, inimitable flow.

Super-producer **Don Corleon** is back with two massive one-drop riddims. The Love Potion riddim drips sweetness with offerings from **Alaine**, **Beres Hammond**, **Pressure**, **Morgan Heritage**, and **Tarrus Riley**. The same stable of artists also blesses Corleon's Far Away riddim, destined to be

run back-to-back with Love Potion in many an early juggling session.

Tarrus Riley has another big record out with his father, the legendary **Jimmy Riley**, called "Pull Up Selector" (a.k.a. "Lock Yuh Machine"), a call for less violence and more dancing in the dancehall that will have many a soundman following the title's lyrical command.

DJ-turned-producer **Delly Ranx** has a new riddim called Brazilian Wax, a high-speed affair with elements similar to his successful 2006 Red Bull and Guinness riddim and vocals from Elephant, Vybz, and Delly himself.

And yes, every once in a while, reggae artists actually put out full albums. A recent standout is *Only King Selassie* (Greensleeves) from **Ras Shiloh**. Produced by the one **King Jammy** at his legendary Waterhouse studio, the album showcases the talents of the man many feel is the heir to the late **Garnett Silk**'s throne; beautiful, heartfelt melodies fill the disc.

After being almost completely absent for two years—something unheard of in the reggae world—**I-Wayne** resurfaces with *Book of Life*, featuring his current smash "Need Her in I Arms." The album is a solid offering that finds the falsetto-voiced Rasta continuing his conscious crusade over new roots riddims, as well as classics like Satta Massagana.

And finally, Mr. Boombastic himself, **Shaggy**, drops his much-anticipated *Intoxication* (VP), filled with boom shots like "Bonafide Girl" (with **Rik Rok** and **Tony Gold**), "Church Heathen," "More Woman," and one of the most interesting combinations in years, "Mad Mad World" with **Sizzla Kalonji** and **Collie Buddz**. One can only imagine that recording session.

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Soundwarp (Vancouver) "Swift Shadow" Classic Analog Techno-Breaks... Mike one-ups his debut album "Tryptamine" (also only from River of Recordings)

Vitalis Popoff (Warsaw) "Leithe" Lush Ambient-Dub... Vitalis takes you to uncharted waters. (Part two: "Oblivion" also available at www.riversof.com)

Tomas Jirku (Vancouver) "I Am A Wild Party" Freaky-Tweaky Minimal Techno. And then Logan meets 90's R&B... (Peep the Jirku remixes on other Rivers albums)

Naw (Toronto) "Terrain Vague" Raw-as-Nails Digital-Dub... Rivers' first album is still hot as ever. (More from Neil coming soon on Rivers)

more: **Mikrokristal** (Vilnius), **Milos** (Bratislava), **Tampopo** (Toulouse), **Rennie Foster** (Tokyo), and more... Visit us online at: WWW.RIVERSOF.COM

beatport



Reggae Guest Reviews: DJ Chocolate

It's not news to anyone that Jamaica has a longstanding tradition of birthing the world's finest reggae artists. But it's probably surprising to some that the great white northern city of Toronto, Canada has had its own deeply entrenched reggae scene since the '60s, after many Caribbean immigrants took up residence there. Music consultant, record-cutter, and selector DJ Chocolate (a.k.a. Lauren Speers) could talk for hours on the topic, but she'd probably just as soon direct you to her radio program, Rebel Music (Mondays from 2:30-5 p.m. EST on CKLN 88.1 FM), where she sheds much light on what's hot *on road* in the Tee-Dot. Here's a sampling of what you might hear. **Ken Taylor** www.myspace.com/dj_chocolate

HUMBLE "HI-GRADE"

white/CAN/7

Humble is the most requested Canadian artist on Rebel Music. His voice is unique, his songwriting is traditionally rootsy but utterly modern and provocative. "Hi-Grade" won the 2007 International Marijuana Music Awards reggae song category, and it is quite possible that Humble is the artist most likely to succeed outside Canada. His music blazes a fire wherever he goes, he performs all over the world and women swoon. Need I say more? **DJ Chocolate**

BLESSED FEATURING JUNIOR KELLY

"RISE UP"

Herb&Culture/CAN/7

Blessed recently released his excellent self-titled debut on Explorer Music, which contained two Juno-award-winning (that's the Canadian Grammys) singles and confirmed his status as Canadian reggae royalty. "Rise Up" is positive and thundering, lyrically and musically superior to any of the songs on his album. It can be played alongside the hottest 45s from Yard, and it might well garner him a third Juno. **DJ Chocolate**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

REAL ROOTS REGGAE: A CANADIAN STORY
JuPeter/CAN/CD

Finally! A compilation featuring some of the best artists and musicians from Canada, coast to coast. CanadianReggaeWorld.com has been giving artists their own web pages for three years now, but now we can play their songs in our cars with much less work. Stalwarts like Leroy Sibbles and Jojo Bennett rub shoulders with talented newbies like Souljah Fyah ("the supreme leaders of the Edmonton reggae scene"), and it sure sounds wicked. **DJ Chocolate**

KENNY B "GOD BLESS THE CHILDREN"

white/CAN/7

There's something special about Kenny, and it's obvious enough that his first single has the distinction of being the first Canadian reggae song produced by and featuring Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, alongside veteran Leroy "Artist" Brown. I'm not sure which part is sweetest: his voice, the horns, or the Riddim Twins' performance, but the composite whole is deliciously rich, mellow, and satisfying. **DJ Chocolate**

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Episode 35

Modeselektor
Formula One Beats



Fast Forward By Method One

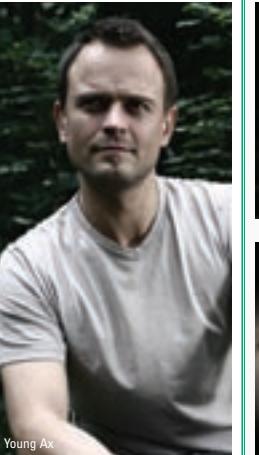
EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF DRUM & BASS



DJ Hype



Total Science



Young Ax

It's almost hard to believe that as we transition into 2008, drum & bass is still alive and well. After all, dance music is a fickle business, and it seems like certain people have been predicting the demise of D&B ever since the first producer figured out how to chop an amen break. But we're still here, even if some of the classics of the genre are growing a few grey hairs. Case in point: "New Forms" by **Roni Size Reprazent** is 10 years old. And the classic "Wormhole" by **Ed Rush & Optical** will soon be 10 as well. It's hard not to feel a little nostalgic.

Total Science's CIA label has also been around for a decade, and it's celebrating with *10*, a new mixed CD that combines some of the label's classic releases with a bunch of new and exclusive goodies. Producers such as **Makoto**, **Break**, **Marky**, and **Bungle** join forces with the Total Science boys to create a mix that really runs the spectrum from chilled-out soul to dancefloor anthems.

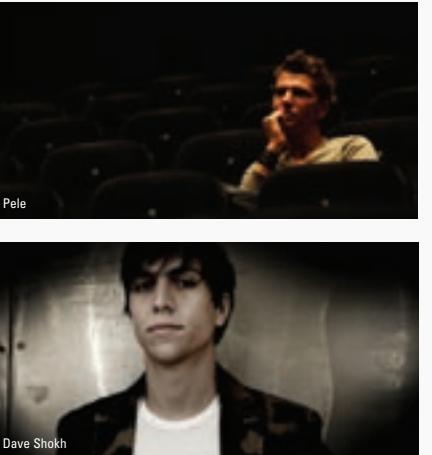
While we're on the subject of new twists on older formulas, **DJ Hype's** classic "You Must Think First" (Ganja) gets a hyperactive 2007 makeover courtesy of **Shimon**. The beats and bass in this one switch directions like a toddler on Red Bull, and cut like a samurai sword. For those who want a more straightforward and bouncy dancefloor tune, flip it over for the **Crystal Clear** remix of "Only One Life."

Westbay Recordings has been on fire lately, thanks to the continual work of label head **Atlantic Connection**. With release #4 on deck, AC has brought in some collaborative heavyweights to switch things up a bit. "Grapevines" features **Makoto** and adds a fun '70s funk twist to the palette without going overboard, as Rhodes piano licks intermingle with bongos straight out of a blaxploitation flick soundtrack. "Can't Hide" features France's **Redeyes** and is definitely for the smoothed-out early-morning crew, with a gorgeous mixture of soulful vocals, piano, strings, and flute.



Bubble Metropolis By ML Tronik

TECHNO: MINIMAL, BANGING, AND BEYOND



Pele



Dave Shokh



Akiko Kiyama

On a similar note, fans of funked-up drum & bass should really check out *Higher Ground* (Santorin), the new album from Germany's **Young Ax**. While a lot of artists have incorporated rare grooves and soul samples into their productions, Young Ax impresses with his ability to make his tracks feel alive and soulful, rather than being clinical and computerized. The breaks scatter and move in unexpected directions, and the melodies stay away from the repetition found in a lot of drum & bass. Very nicely done.

Going into darker territories, the Cylon label returns after a few years' absence with a welcome new 12" from **Loxy**. "Shell Shock" (featuring **Matt U**) is a tribal drum workout that rolls out heavy, with a deep-wobble bass that is sure to turn subwoofers to mush. **Gremlinz** comes in to collaborate on "Silver Steez," which deftly teases in some of the old-school flavor of past Cylon releases before dropping into a propulsive dancefloor roller.

And going back to the opening theme of past versus present, I want to end this month's column with a shout-out to some legendary producers who are returning to the drum & bass community after long absences. Welcome back, **Polar** and **PFM**—it's been a long time, but I'm looking forward to seeing what you both have planned for 2008 and beyond.

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In searching back through the past progressions of this so-called technologically advanced dance music we know as techno, it's apparent that for as many folks as there are pushing boundaries in the genre, there's an equal amount that wish to keep it steeped in the past. Take **Minilogue**'s newest, *Orgular* (Minilogue), for example. This release comes with a bouncy minimalist jam on the a-side, but on the flip it's a deep, dark dub-techno trip à la Basic Channel. The fact that this is a two-track 10" (for those of you who like to get physical) shouldn't be lost on Moritz and Mark fans, either.

Another label that seems to have an eye on the past is Connoisseur, who recently offered up **Pele** & **Shokh's** *Thumbs*. The label is consistently one of my favorites, and this release is like your mom back in her cheerleading days—tough but bouncy. Check the **Simon Baker** remix before back-flip practice.

Brian Zentz has returned as **Stare5** to drop *Blanco Esqueleto* (CMYK) on us. Zentz wastes no time on this one, giving us three upfront, tracky techno cuts with some deft synth work and straight-ahead U.S.-techno moxie. All three tracks smolder, so rock 'em! Fans of Seventh City and **Palette** will dig this.

And speaking of **Palette**, Mr. **John Tejada**, the unassuming workaholic that he is, has finally returned to his own label to drop two incendiary slabs. His solo, two-track effort, "Labyrinth," is top-to-bottom impeccable. Check "Tyranny of Choice" for a bit of old-school flavor with a 2008 flair. The next is his *Live 07* release, produced alongside longtime cohort **Arian Leviste**. Listening to this one, I can almost imagine the screams and claps as these tracks were performed. And tell me I'm not the only one who thinks "Lost in Thought" is an homage to Orbital.

Martin Buttrich is back with yet another banger, and this time he's outdone himself. No doubt by the time you read this *Hunter/Hunted* (Cocoon) will have rocked a dancefloor near you. Buttrich does a great job of pacing the track, break-

RECORD YOUR VISIONS

LINE 6



Lucky 13 By Toph One

TophOne can be heard every Wednesday at the RedWine Social at Dalva in San Francisco



Ostensibly, I went to Austin, Texas for a weekend of bikes and beer with my cousins Wendy and Jason, but it became a two-week train odyssey interspersed with impossibly huge Tex-Mex dinners, genuine down-home hospitality, and enough Lone Star to drown a marauding elephant. And I might have found the love of my life: the Spider House Bar. Part beer garden, part funky cafe, part junk-art project, and all the way good, this was the most welcoming of bivouacs—spinning records with Chicken George and sipping Live Oak Oktoberfest under the corrugated steel roof on the outdoor stage as dogs wandered aimlessly about and a light rain began to fall. Heaven? Possibly, and definitely worthy of an annual pilgrimage.

1. BROWNOT HOMENAJE

Freestyle/UK/CD

A band like this restores my faith that all may not be lost. Technically on-point yet fun and groovy as all hell, if this doesn't get the party started, y'all must be D.O.A.! Cazadores for Austin's finest!

2. SOUTH RAKKAS MIX UP

Mad Decent/US/LP

Electro-muffin re-fixes and some gems for sure—Malcolm McClaren mashed with Kid Foreigner, Inner City with New Kidz, and Geefus and Ninja Kid over the Pointer Sisters doing *Sesame Street*. Folks like Daddy Rolo, Dos Rexx, and Steady P. should be banging this fo' sho.

3. THE SHOTGUN WEDDING QUINTET S/T

Jazz Mafia/US/CD

Solid Bay Area jazzy hip-hop with DJ Aspect McCarthy on the cut. Plenty of party rockers, but they really shine when the strings soar and horns blare for full cinematic effect on "Don't Wake Me Up" and "Time Will Judge." A round of Crown for these fellas.



4. DESIGNATED HITTERS VS. LITTLE BROTHER

"TIME OF YOUR LIFE"

ScionAV/US/12

L.A.'s Designated Hitters production duo channels J Dilla with Lil Brother on the raps. Nice.

5. REPLIKAS TUZLA BLUES

Pozitif/TUR/CD

After having my mind blown open by the film *Crossing the Bridge*, I researched the Replikas and found more of their looping, grinding majesty on the interweb, including this otherworldly treasure from 2006's *Film Muzikleri* CD. I am now addicted.

6. ERNEST GONZALES WHILE ON SATURN'S RINGS

Exponential/US/CD

Like an illbient remix of Tommy Guerrero covering The Cure. Haunting lullabies for sleepytyme daydreamers (and 4 a.m. river-walkers).

7. DOPESTYLE THE LITTLE HAPPY/ FOOL'S POOL

Daly City/US/2CD

Dopestyle knows how to tell a twisted tale, and with DJ/producer 4AM, these miscreants have crafted a fine album of lo-tech dirt vibes. Guests FatHed and Motion Man only add to the thickness.

8. MAKESTAPES "SIMPATICO"

indie/US/7

Like the aptly titled track on the b-side, "Sunrise Shorebreak," Houston's Makestapes creates languid, fluid songs perfect for a wordless surf film or lazy afternoons napping in the winter sun. And I have heard untitled originals that will make you cry.

9. SOULFOLK FEAT. WILL HAMMOND JR.

"TO BE CONTINUED"

DreamTree/US/CD

Comparisons to D'Angelo and Peven Everett may be trite, but that's sort of where this ex-Midnight Voices singer/songwriter is at. Luscious classic soul sounds on "Jaded," "When It Rains," and "Goodbye" show the breadth of this multi-talented S.F. artist.

10. V/A "VERSUS"

Refuge/US/12EP

Most def be on the lookout for this new NY label devoted to mash-ups, bootlegs, and odd covers. Check Daho vs. Fisherspooner "Tombé Pour La France (Chef Remix)" and Archigram vs. NIN's "Ninagram," and track down the slamming remixes of Antipop vs. Asia Argento on "Vampy." Wowza.

11. HARRI KAKOULLI "BLISS LIKE GOLD"

Six Degrees/US/download

From his days playing bass with Squeeze to producing the groundbreaking *Fuse* compilations, Harri Kakoulli comes with a musical pedigree. Arabesque beats and sounds here from Six Degrees.

12. H.I.S.D. THE DISTRICT

Peace Uv Mind/US/CD

One of the cats from Houston Independent Spit District passed me their CD while I was spinning at DJ Sun's Rocksteady Mondays joint at The Flat. This eight-man crew has got some of the smoothest soulful beats and lyrical styles I've ever heard on a debut.

LUCKY 13. KID ACNE "EDDY FRESH"

UK/video

Oi! "Fresh Like a Wino" Ackers delivers psychedelic milk to Roots Manuva while hotties step to it on a *Graffiti Rock* throwback set.



IN THE STUDIO: JAY HAZE

THE TECHNO, HOUSE, AND NU-SOUL POLYMATH TAKES US ON A HAZY WALK THROUGH HIS RECORDING PROCESS.

WORDS: KEN TAYLOR PHOTO: RAGNAR SCHMUCK

WAS THERE LESS SEQUENCING THAN USUAL?
Not at all. In fact there was far more sequencing than usual. At a tempo like 90 bpm there is so much detail to explore!

THERE'S A STRONG HIP-HOP/FUNK FEEL TO THIS RECORD. WHO OR WHAT DID YOU LOOK TO FOR THAT INSPIRATION?

I can only say I was extremely inspired by Mary Jane when writing this album. Musically, I take inspiration from life, and in my life I grew up listening to hip-hop and soul... people like Curtis Mayfield, Sly, Marvin Gaye, P-Funk, and others. Also, I am coming from the East Coast, Philadelphia, so it is hard to escape this influence. In Philly, we just got the funkin' soul, man!

WHAT'S THE KEY TO MAKING ELECTRONIC MUSIC SOULFUL?

If you've got soul, your music will reflect that. Not everyone can make music soulful. Sure there are lots of goodie-good textbook soul singers and players out there, but soul is about a struggle and how your mind releases that struggle... To quote Chuck D, "You can't put soul in a bottle. You can't quantify soul."

WHAT DOES YOUR STUDIO SET-UP CONSIST OF?

My studio is a combination of analog and digital. The monitors are Martin Audio Bullfrogs. My mixer is a Soundcraft Ghost 32-channel. Put anything through it and it sounds fatter (when you soft clip, that is)—this is my favorite piece of gear! I sequence with Ableton Live, as I find it to be the most intuitive of all sequencers, and it is a revolution! For drums, I sometimes use [Native Instruments] Battery 3 [drum sampler], and for synths I love, love, love the FM7/FM8—this has to be the best soft synth ever! Native Instruments is really on top of the game.

HOW DID YOU RECORD THE VOCALS?

The vocals were recorded in my studio. I got one of those sE Electronics [Reflexion Filter] portable vocal booths. It worked great! I used tube pre-amps with a Røde mic. Then later, I added some compression with UAD plug-ins and added effects after the recording.

HOW DOES A JAY HAZE TRACK DIFFER FROM A FUCKPONY TRACK?

A Jay Haze track has lots more effort and time put into it... With Fuckpony, it is all about having fun, no more no less—"crack a smile and enjoy"-type shit. With Jay Haze, I wanna touch you a bit more, I wanna get inside your head and get to know you.

WHAT WAS THE SONGWRITING PROCESS LIKE?

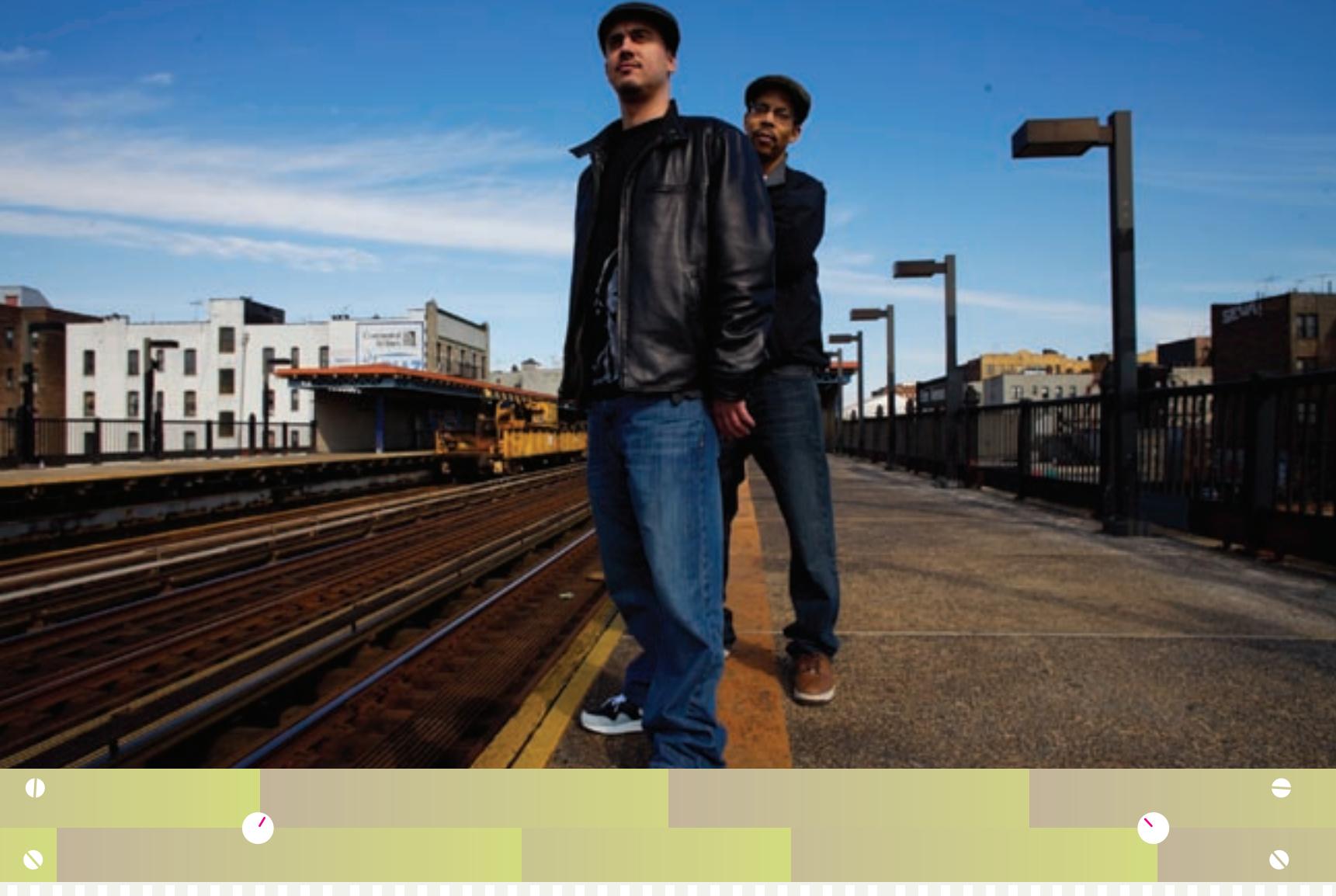
Some songs were written on airplanes, and I even wrote one on a beach in Thailand ("Floating Away"). I would say on the vocal album, the songs really had a lot of work put into them. It isn't easy for me to write songs I really feel—that takes real patience. It was nothing like making techno or house. Making functional dance music is extremely easy and fun—this was a real challenge.



IN JAY HAZE'S STUDIO: ABLETON LIVE 7, SOUNDCRAFT GHOST MIXER, SE ELECTRONICS REFLEXION FILTER

Jay Haze's *Love and Beyond* is out in February on TuningSpork.

www.jayhaze.com



ARTIST TIPS: KON AND AMIR

It's fitting that BBE/Rapster tapped DJs Kon & Amir for their *Kings of* series, as these two beat-diggers (a.k.a. Christian "Kon" Taylor and Amir Abdullah) have been sifting through crates for more than a decade, unearthing gems of all sorts and bringing them to the masses via radio, mixtapes, and mixed CDs like their latest, *Off Track—Volume One: The Bronx* (BBE). Though they're primarily known as the Kings of Digging, this pair also knows a thing or two about how to get primo shit into the right hands—they've successfully sold tons of beats and samples to big-name producers. Here are a few of Kon's tips on how to get your beats heard. *Derek Grey*

www.myspace.com/konandamir

MAKE SURE YOU PUT YOUR BANGERS FIRST.

Heads do not want to sit and listen to beats that are putting them to sleep. As far as length, I would go with about one minute and 30 seconds for each beat. Make sure that sonically they are on-point, with the right levels and such. People want the tracks ready to go.

SHOW OFF YOUR RANGE.

Maybe some R&B-type joints, some grimy, evil-type joints, up-tempo club beats, and your 70-88-bpm down-South beats. With all of these bases covered, there should be no need for them to ask questions like, "What else you got?"

USE MYSPACE TO SHOWCASE YOUR TRACKS.

On our page, I put up three tracks that I did that all have a similar sound, yet all have a different feel: some soulful vocals, some bouncy head-nod boom-bap-type of vibes. I think this is a very inexpensive (read: free!) way to get heard, and you get to see how many people have listened, too.

BE ORIGINAL.

How many times am I going to hear the same old stock Korg Triton sounds? Sure they sound great, especially when we heard The Neptunes rock them, but as soon as I hear anything that sounds like a cheap imitation, you lost me. And if you're going to

make keyboard beats, at least learn some chords. There's a big difference between being a producer and a beat-maker. If you don't know the difference, production may not be your calling.

TRY NOT TO HAVE YOUR TRACK STOLEN!

If you are sending out beat CDs in bulk, as bad as this may sound, it's good to have drops over your tracks every few bars, so thieves have to be crafty to jack them. If there's interest in the track, then let them hear the version without the drops; at that point you know who is listening and who you're dealing with. You never know where your CD will end up, and there are so many snakes out there ready to get money off of your hard work!

"HANDS OFF" IS NOT AN OPTION



Meet your new musical addiction: the KAOSSILATOR from Korg. Play it alone or add it to your rig for over-the-top, music-making mayhem.

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Whether you play an instrument or not, you'll want to get your hands on the KAOSSILATOR. It's the ultimate sketchpad or performance instrument for anyone itching for a little anarchy.

GEARING UP

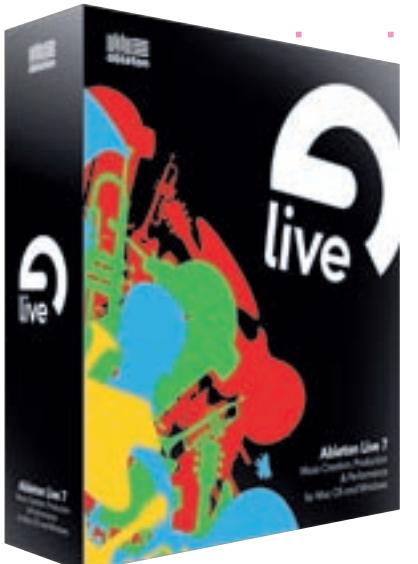
FIVE PIECES WE'RE STOKED TO SEE AT 2008'S FIRST MUSIC-TECHNOLOGY TRADESHOW.

Words Ken Taylor and Ethan Holben
www.thenammshow.com



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NATIVE INSTRUMENTS KORE 2 DIGITAL AUDIO WORKSTATION

NI's KORE 2 brings some welcome improvements, namely the Performance Preset Manager, enabling a smoother interchange between sounds and set-ups. Plus, the controller now comes with pre-programmed assignments for 34 different third-party plug-ins. (\$499)



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Photo: DJ, artist / producer with the DMIX300

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Photo: DJ, artist / producer with the DMIX300

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THE LOGICAL APPROACH

APPLE LOGIC STUDIO DIGITAL AUDIO WORKSTATION

With Logic Studio, it appears that Apple has officially raised the curtain on its 21st century business plan: Make astoundingly cheap, astoundingly kick-ass software. Make it available exclusively for Mac users. Sit back and watch the hardware sales roll in. Will it work? Who knows, but for the time being I'd strongly consider pulling MSFT out of your 401k portfolio. Logic Studio retails for \$500. That's \$500 less than the previous version of Logic, and around \$500 less than the newest pro version of Cubase.

Big deal, right? Apple must have stripped down the software and begun selling all those revered Logic plug-ins separately. Nope. Wrong. In fact, Apple added a bunch of software, much of which used to be sold separately. The notables include five immense Jam Pack sample libraries, Soundtrack Pro 2 (post-production software), and Mainstage, a new stand-alone application geared towards live performance that allows you to access Logic instruments and effects outside of the host software.

But awesome extras aren't the only changes Jobs and Co. made to Logic Studio. They completely revamped the user interface, and—not surprisingly—improved it considerably. A new, almost unrecognizable tabbed Arrange window manages to fit everything (recording window, editing window, mixer, file browsers, and settings controls) on a single pane. Logic's new look and feel owes much to the straightforward GarageBand, and most operations are correspondingly simple. Editing is greatly improved, with awesome new punch-in mechanisms, time-stretch and compress features available right from the Arrange window, and brand-new right-click context menus. Of course, the list goes on. Logic Studio is deep, deep software and is one of the strongest DAWs we've ever seen. For \$500, if you're a Mac user, it's a no-brainer. If you're still giving Bill Gates your hard-earned cash, well... have you priced a Mac Mini lately? **Roger Thomasson**

MSRP: \$499; www.apple.com



iPORT FS2

The iPort FS2 is a heavy docking station for iPods of any size, but all that weight packs a punch that any audiophile will love. In addition to the usual syncing and charging functions, the iPort offers fixed or variable output from an high-quality built-in preamp and multiple video output options. If you're looking to integrate an iPod into a swanky home theater system, **steer your ship toward this iPort**, as multiple upgrade kits bring even higher-quality output and wall-mount possibilities into play. A hefty, clever locking mechanism ensures compatibility with future models, but would it have killed them to sneak a remote into the package? **Rob Geary**

MSRP: \$200; www.iportmusic.com



M-AUDIO WAYOUT WARE KIKAXXE PLUG-IN

During the '70s, bands like Yes and Tangerine Dream worked with giant modular synthesizers and only the latest in Moog innovation. Meanwhile, **your dad had to settle for the poor man's version** of all that stuff—like the Arp Axxe. Originally scoffed at by synth dorks, the thin-sounding Axxe gained fame via '80s techno as a pawn-shop special. But now that you can't find an Axxe for 50 bucks anymore, Way Out Ware has developed a recreation: the Kikaxxe. Stepping beyond the original Axxe by including a drum machine, a 16-step sequencer, a preset library, and an excellent tape-delay effect, the Kikaxxe is best at spazzy rave leads and basslines. Monophonic like the original, this thing doesn't do much in the way of pads or atmosphere—it's a synth better suited to beginners and people looking for instant gratification. **Brandon Ivers**

MSRP: \$69.95; www.m-audio.com



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SHURE SE110 SOUND ISOLATING EARPHONES

With portable MP3 players creeping into the wallet/keys/cellphone triumvirate of leaving-the-house necessities, it's no surprise that iPod rockers everywhere are paying closer attention to the quality of their earphones. With these consumers in mind, Shure has finally released a pair of excellent earphones that won't send them into sticker shock. The SE110s feature sound isolation and audio performance that is **far superior to other consumer-grade earbud sets**, with crisp sound in the highs and mids, and only slight compression in the bass. The sizable collection of both foam and soft-flex in-ear sleeves will convince even a die-hard headphone user to give these puppies a whirl, and while those leaked Lil Wayne MP3s you scored may be exposed as lifeless, low-bit-rate garble, your 320s will sound that much better. *Ross Holland*
MSRP: \$99; www.shure.com

NATIVE INSTRUMENTS KONTAKT 3

Native Instruments has pushed Kontakt to the sound-designer crew since the beginning, but this new version should open up their flagship soft sampler to an even wider audience. The biggest improvement is the new UI, which has a look and feel similar to Guitar Rig's stripped-down rack approach. Also similar to Guitar Rig, functions like drag-and-drop shortcuts have been greatly expanded—you can do things like drag a sliced MIDI loop directly from Kontakt to your sequencer of choice. Not to be discounted is the new sample library, where the pianos and multi-sampled instruments (i.e. acoustic drums) rival even the best stand-alone collections. But most importantly, NI has gone a long way to cut down on the overwhelming factor with Kontakt—you can get super-deep or just open up patches. Either way, it's **a stable, excellent-sounding sampler that doesn't require attending a training seminar to use**. *Brandon Ivers*
MSRP: \$449; www.native-instruments.com

NOKIA N81 8GB MULTIMEDIA GSM PHONE

If you can dig Nokia's interface (I find it a bit confusing), there's nothing not to love about the N81. Well, almost nothing. Despite its bulkiness, this 8GB quad-band slider offers much in the way of multimedia. Store up to 1,600 tracks and listen to them on the device's convenient earbud/mic accessory, which allows for quick-and-easy switching between calls and jams. Gaming is pretty advanced on this one, too, with the N-Gage service that enables users to download games from EA, Capcom, and more. FM radio tuner, Nokia Store access, and direct-to-phone podcast subscriptions all make the N81 **a hot piece for music enthusiasts on the go**. The buttons are a little tight, as is the directional control surface, but the N81 is nicely built and feels solid enough to take a few hard knocks. *Ken Taylor*
MSRP: \$629; www.nokia.com

PIONEER SVM-1000 4-CHANNEL AUDIO AND VIDEO MIXER

For their latest audio/visual-mixing console, Pioneer has pulled out all the stops. The SVM-1000 is one of the most advanced touch-screen control surfaces, with the potential for four simultaneous clips of audio-and-video synchronization (which also integrate pre-edited visuals for use with Pioneer's DVJ-1000 DVD/CD decks). Although probably most ideal for mega-venues, this mammoth board also comes equipped with a mass of utilitarian effects that could stoke out any DJ—high-profile Las Vegas trance-club resident or not. This supreme mixer offers 12 easy-to-trigger effects (delay, reverb, pan, etc.) in addition to 12 MIDI-assignable visual effects (like zoom, blur, distortion), syncing capabilities, and JPEG manipulation. For any DJ looking to up the mix ante with a visual experience, this monster is the savior. *Pray that it's at the club you're headed to.* *Fred Miketa*
MSRP: \$5,999; www.pioneerprodj.com

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A SPACE ODYSSEY

Mass Effect's composer taps '70s electronic masters to create sci-fi bliss.

WORDS RYAN RAYHILL

BioWare's *Mass Effect* was not just one of the most (deservedly) hyped games of 2007, but perhaps the biggest sci-fi epic to ever grace the medium, with an equally impressive soundtrack comparable to the classic scores of *Star Wars* or *Blade Runner*. A tall statement, to be sure, but few games in recent memory have been able to evoke both the feeling of atmospheric wonder and impending danger of outer space that composer Jack Wall and his team have created. We spoke with Wall about his involvement in the first installment of the *Mass Effect* trilogy.

XLR8R: What were your goals for *Mass Effect*?

Jack Wall: Since *Mass Effect* is an original title, not based on any pre-existing license, my goal was to create a musical signature for the game that would take it through many years of sequels and expansions. So the challenge was to create something unique and interesting that would really add to the experience and become one with the title over a long period of time.

The music captures the spirit of late '70s/early '80s sci-fi films, reminiscent of Tangerine Dream, Vangelis, or even John Carpenter.

Did these artists influence you?

Yes, they did. In fact, this was the vision for the score put forth by Casey Hudson, the Project Director on *Mass Effect*. He had a very clear idea of what the music should be. My job, at least initially, was to come up with a sound to match these influences, but also to make something unique and that could stand on its own. Other influences were the Cliff Martinez score to the remake of *Solaris* and some other '80s films with more heroic influences.

Has music achieved a respectable status in gaming?

I think it's maturing nicely over time. I've been totally into the score to *Halo 3*, where Marty O'Donnell and Michael Salvatori took a very counter-pastoral approach. It ends up highlighting the artwork and gameplay as a more visceral or even spiritual experience. The music is beautiful, which sort of runs counter to what's happening in the game, but works really well. I see that as a sign of maturity—something film music has done for decades.

What tools did you use to create *Mass Effect*'s haunting soundscapes?

As with almost all composers nowadays, I use computers to make the music. Since we were basing the score on the '70s/'80s electronic masters, I used Moog synths, the [Yamaha] CS-80, etcetera, and I equipped myself with the Arturia soft-synth remakes of all of those instruments. I also use Reason, Reaktor, Absynth,

Albino, Atmosphere, Trilogy, Stylus RMX, Sonik Synth 2, and the state-of-the-art orchestral- and ethnic-instrument libraries. I want to mention that although I am the lead composer on *Mass Effect*, I worked with three others on this score—Sam Hulick [was] my co-composer, with Richard Jacques and David Kates providing additional music.

What other games have you worked on? Any other current projects?

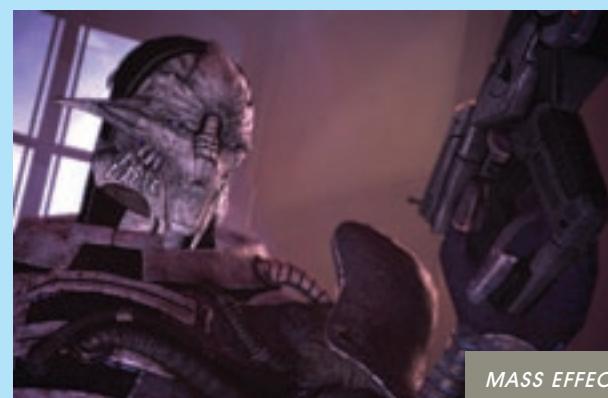
I worked on the *Myst* series for many years, *Splinter Cell*, *Jade Empire*, and many other titles—around 30 in all. Right now, I'm focused on *Video Games Live* with my partner Tommy Tallarico. We're traveling all over the world performing the greatest hits of videogaming with a full orchestra and choir, synchronized to game footage and a moving light show. It's really a lot of fun and the demand for it has been increasing at a rapid pace.

Were you a fan of sci-fi before *Mass Effect*?

Yes! I love the newer, more mysterious side of sci-fi, like the stories in *Event Horizon*, *Solaris*, and the much more recent *Sunshine*. *Mass Effect* really works well for me since the story starts only a few years in the future with a discovery on Mars. Since, in reality, humans are planning to go to Mars right now, you can sort of extrapolate how the *Mass Effect* story could actually happen. I think the best sci-fi stories are all firmly grounded in reality. You have to be able to see how they relate to real life. That's why I'm happy about the direction of the music for *Mass Effect*—it has the futuristic sound from the electronics mixed with more organic sounds. Machine-meets-man—very cool stuff.

Mass Effect (BioWare) is out now for Xbox 360. masseffect.bioware.com

To hear audio clips from the game, go to XLR8R.com/114extras.



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loading...

XLR8R picks the hottest videogames and gear of the month.

WORDS: RYAN RAYHILL



With the year that conclusively proved every suspicion we ever had about the Ho-ly Trinity of Britney, Paris, and Lindsay firmly behind us, it's time to once again wash our hands clean of the past and begin anew. And what better way to kick off the New Year with a little irresponsible property damage, a Nazi invasion of the Eastern seaboard, and a little stone-cold justice? Read on!

As Rygar, the original god of war (if you remember 1987, that is), you return to slay all manner of minotaur, Cyclops, and titan on the Wii. Unleash bone-hewing combos with your razor-sharp... shield... with a chain on it... that magically comes back to you after you throw it. *Rygar: The Battle of Argus* (Tecmo) not only fills an awesome-shaped hole in our Wii collection but also one in our hearts.

One of the most popular driving series of all time returns with *Burnout Paradise* (EA: Xbox 360, PS3). Racing, however, is not the priority—destruction and mayhem is the name of this game as careening into oil tankers and causing double-digit pile-ups earns you props in the sprawling metropolis of Paradise City (we hear good things about the grass).

The Nazis—the ultimate evil power of the 20th century—must have planned for the advent of videogames because they seem to be in every other one since 1981's *Castle Wolfenstein*. Not only does *Turning Point: Fall of Liberty* (Codemasters; Xbox 360, PS3) feature Nazis heavily, it also serves up an alternate reality where the bastards actually have the stones to invade New York City in 1953. Most surprisingly, you don't play a Hitler-smashing super-soldier, but instead a simple construction worker caught in the middle of the Third Reich's Manhattan sneak attack. Heavy!

This month also brings us *Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law* (Capcom; Wii, PS2, PSP) to flagrantly flap the wings of justice in the face of crime. Adult Swim's aloof law-bringer will feature in five different "cases," complete with all the voices (Stephen Colbert, Gary "Bill Lumbergh" Cole) that make the show a surreal delight. No objections here.

With law, as those of us who watch a lot of TNT know, comes order. Or, in the case of *Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice* (Sony: PS2, PSP), car chases and explosions. As a member of the Pursuit Force you wage a statewide war against gangs and violence by commandeering tanks, trains, and planes, and blowing the bejeezus out of local crime syndicates. Sounds about right. Interestingly, both versions are able to transfer saves to each other so you can finish on the portable PSP what you've started at home on the PS2.

Justice isn't just for birdmen and super-cops, however. *Insecticide* (Gamecock; DS) brings it to our diminutive (or huge, if you live in my apartment) six-legged friends as well. Playing disturbingly sexy bug detective Chrys Liszt, you must solve a murder at the local nectar-bottling plant along with your hardboiled partner Roachy Caruthers. Cool, cute, and kinda gross all at once.

Fans of old-school space shooters like *R-Type* and *Gradius* rejoice!

Nanostray 2 (Majesco; DS) brings classic gameplay (and challenges)

back to the future as you skillfully pilot your kitted-out space cruiser into the depths of the galaxy, defending humanity against the invading alien threat. Okay, that's the plot of every space game, but *Nanostray 2*'s excellent graphics and customization should satisfy even the most hardcore fan of arcade-style action.

Speaking of space, it's been said that we know much more about its vastness than we do our own seas here on earth. *Endless Ocean* (Nintendo; Wii) gives you the opportunity to remedy that. Huge in Japan, *Endless Ocean* is not so much a game as an open-ended scuba-diving excursion that has you in search of undersea treasure and wild photo opportunities with all manner of fauna, ranging from penguins to whales. We were hoping for a bonus area featuring amorous mermaids but we won't...hold our breath? Zing!

 Catch the weekly Loading... column at XLR8R.com/news.

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VIS-ED: FIGHTING

A Canadian duo cuts, pastes, and painstakingly inks its way through the darkness.

In the hands of lesser men, a palette of skulls and evil Vikings, daggers and '70s-inspired hippie nature themes would come together like some bad t-shirt display at Urban Outfitters.

That Fighting whips these elements into collages and illustrations that are timeless rather than trendy is a feat—one that wouldn't be possible if not for the duo's keen eye and serious drawing abilities.

Fighting is Lukas Geronimas and Niall McClelland, both 27. The pair grew up in a suburb outside of Toronto; they grudgingly met when their parents decided they would carpool to high school together. They bonded over *Star Wars* and eventually moved to Vancouver, where they began collaborating on t-shirts, zines, and commissions for avant-grindcore label Fathme, snowboard giant Burton, and *Color*, a local skate mag. Geronimas has since decamped to Brooklyn, but the pair continues to collaborate on gallery shows and clever t-shirt designs, among other things. We had a chat with them about some of their favorite things: skulls, fantasy creatures, and peach-infused pork.

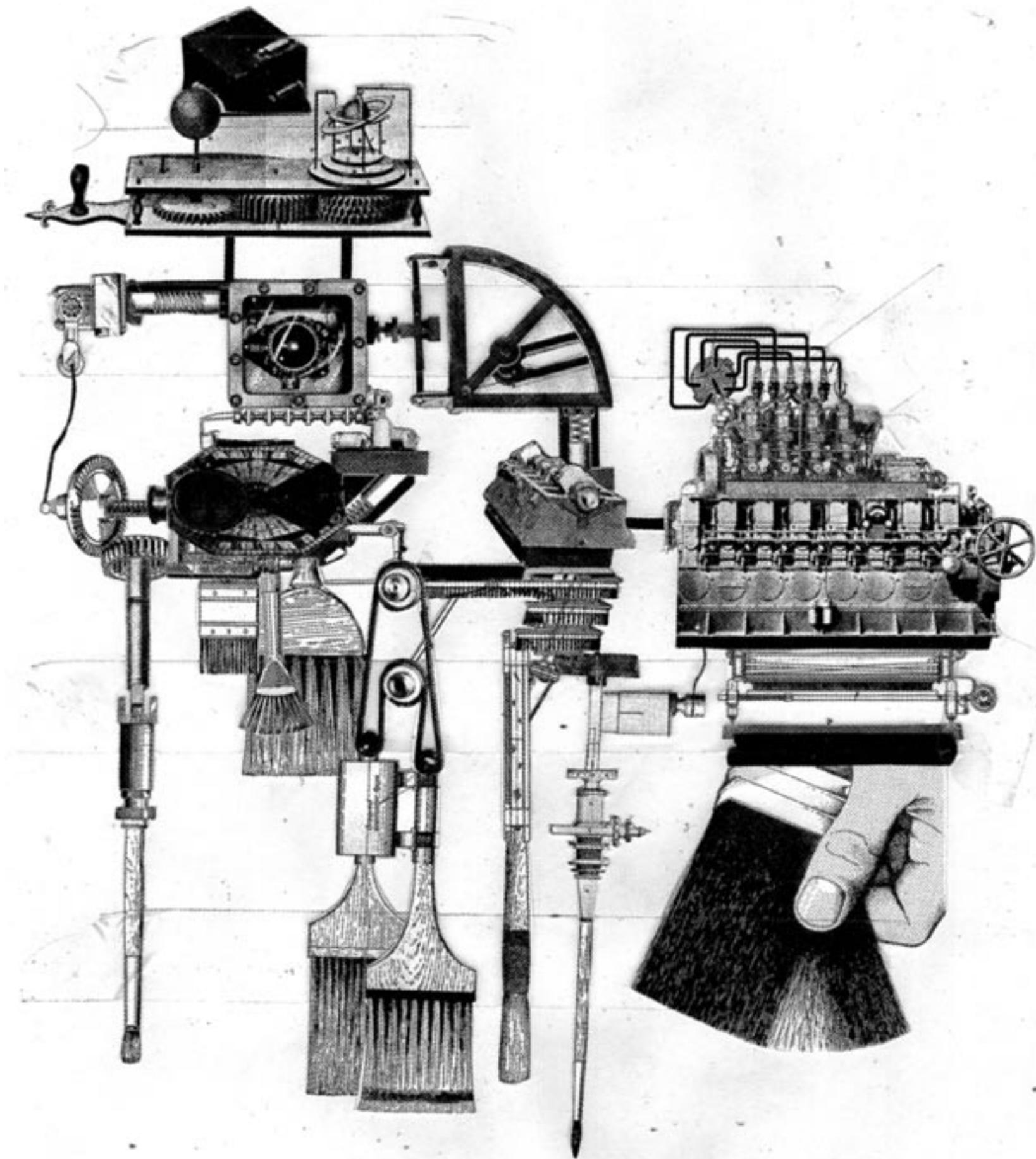
www.shedoesntloveyouanymore.com, niallmccllland.blogspot.com, lukasgeronimas.blogspot.com

You do a lot of collage work. Is there a way you usually start, and do you have a concept in mind from the beginning?

Lukas Geronimas: Collages are a way to appropriate and exhibit some of the terribly fascinating imagery that has been published and hidden inside books on library shelves where no one will ever see it. The library is like our soil, or our Petri dish, or whatever (it's a fertile place). It gives us all the source imagery we could ever need, which allows us to go in whatever direction our brains ask us to go. Niall and I spend a day at the beginning of large collage projects, sifting through volumes, marking pages, and making photocopies, and then we go home and start cutting our pages apart until we feel ready to begin the arranging and pasting process. We have concepts, yes—they consist primarily of wanting to make things awesome and rad.

What are some of your shared obsessions?

Niall McClelland: Basketball, exploring, rock 'n' roll, forests, Kinkos, the library, and ramblin' on. LG: We nerd out to dark fantasy shit sometimes, and black holes, and we both really dig on eating and soaring guitar licks and the woods. Girls, too, although we don't share them. *Bud-dum ching!*





ABOVE:
Down the Mountain,
in the Shit, 2007
(paper collage and
india ink)

What is your favorite fantasy creature?

NM: I'm not a huge fan of heroes or of villains, so I'm not overly keen on creatures who match the archetypes of "fantasy" realms. My current favorite is a dwarf named Tyrion, with mismatched eyes, a bumpy face, and half a nose, from a series of books from

George R.R. Martin, *A Song of Ice and Fire*. He is neither the hero nor the villain, but simply a very intelligent, grotesque man of high

birth with a love for whores and booze. LG: The Japanese have demons called *yokai*; they are tricksters and fiendish but I think they're sensible. They're my favorite category of creatures. I really like thinking about the Leviathan, so maybe it's my favorite single creature.

Will skulls ever go out of style?

NM: Sure, but fuck style. They might go out of

"fashion" but skulls are timeless symbols of rebellion, of outsider thinking, of questioning authority. Sure, skulls are being pawned off on the masses right now, but you can always see the phony ones from the legitimate. I don't think metalheads and punks are giving up skulls anytime soon. And like... Georgia O'Keefe was big-time into skulls, and 60-year-old moms the world over still *love* her work, right?

What was your favorite moment of 2007?

LG: The first bite of celebrated chef Matt Dillon's ultra-tender, fat-infused, peach-topped, home-butchered pork at Seattle's Sitka and Spruce restaurant. Holy heaven.

What was the worst trend of 2007?

NM: People being "over it." Is that an '07 trend? Can we lose that one? How 'bout people referring to themselves as "cool kids"?

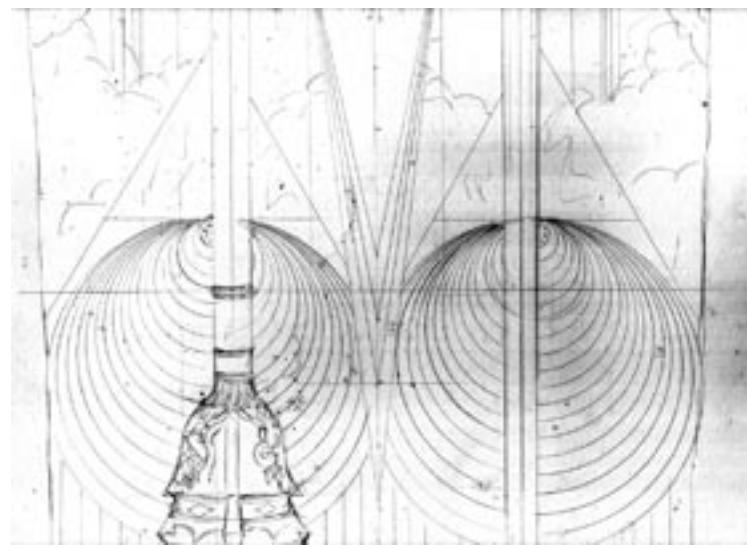


ABOVE:
Color magazine editorial
illustration, 2007 (india ink
on illustration board)

What things do you find scary?

NM: A large spectrum of things: spiders, murder, war, drowning, flying, failing, disease, decapitation, rape, basements... Too much really!

LG: Zombie movies. Dreaming about the death of family members, that's scarier. And scariest is lying (p.s. joking and lying are very different).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
McClaren and Westwood SEXfarm
 copy, 1976 (photocopy collage);
Dirty Collage, 2006
 (photocopy collage);
Inside Dust Storm, 2007
 (sanded pre-dawn plywood);
Weapons of Light (sketch) 2007
 (pencil on paper)



What is the scariest song/album/band you have ever heard?

LG: The Wolf Eyes album *Dead Hills*. I bought it because it made me feel like shit on a beautiful sunny day. My roommate Catherine and I listened to it one Halloween and it really did us in, even with the lights on. It makes any death rap or black-metal stuff sound like lollipop gumdrop happy-pappy parade songs.

Where is your *Graves* zine available?

LG: We're making them, but we haven't published any yet. Niall and I are what some folks call "in a financial slump," and other, less prosaic people call "being broke." They're going to get re-vamped online, and then we're going to put them together in a little omnibus. We started making them to go along with our second season of shirts, back in 2005.

What is your dream project?

NM: Designing a city park? All the signage, the playgrounds, the paths. I'm interested in making wild things that are integrated into the lives of a large demographic, things that function at a high level but also challenge the standard form.

Is constant dissatisfaction with one's work an important part of being an artist?

LG: If it's a constant, I think all you need to do is account for it. Accounting for it is important, though, yes.

What's the best advice you have ever received?

NM: Years ago, a friend was talking about

his line work, and how it rarely showed any signs of error or uncertainty. He just figured, "Draw every line with confidence, so even when it's off it doesn't make a difference because it communicates the same thing." Not sure if it was the best piece of advice I've received, but it definitely affected the way I drew from then on.

LG: I don't think that's something I can

quantify. I think an eagle once told me that being the token of freedom is a warm drag, and that might have blown my mind.

LEFT TO RIGHT:
Labour Days, 2006
 (photocopy collage);
 process for construction of
Cabin Familiar 2007
 (wood, canvas, roofing tar, ink,
 graphite, and coal)



TBC: Bit by Bit

A scientist who helped develop the MP3 format talks about digital music's past and future.

Radiohead's self-issued, internet-first, pay-as-you-wish release of *In Rainbows* is perhaps the best-selling digital album ever, according to unofficial early sales figures. But the stunt's revolutionary appeal was tarnished when it was revealed that the files were released at a sub-par bit rate.

It would be interesting to hear what Dr. Jürgen Herre would have to say about such a fanatical debate over bit rate, as he's probably been involved in a few during his career. As Chief Scientist for Media Activities at the Fraunhofer Institute for Integrated Circuits in Erlangen, Germany, Herre is as clued-in to the history of the MP3 as his title suggests. Since joining the Institute in 1989, he has worked in the lab where MP3 technology was developed and finalized just 15 years ago. He remembers the jury-rigged devices used to test the technology in its infancy, and has seen the nascent format perfected, popularized, and retooled into multi-channel surround MP3 technology (www.mp3surround.com).

Herre recently spoke to *XLR8R* about the format's creation and continued development.

XLR8R: What was the original reason for developing the MP3 format?

Jürgen Herre: At the time, people were looking for data reduction schemes for digital audio. The Eureka 147 project, which started in 1987, was underway, which was meant to develop digital audio broadcasting for European radio systems, and you needed a lot of space to carry all the frequencies. People started to compete to solve that problem. Also, broadcast reporters wanted to convey live sounds over broadband, so we wanted to find out how to squeeze high-quality sound through a digital telephone line.

Describe the tests that you were running.

At the time, tests couldn't be done on computers because they didn't have enough processing power to decode

the audio in real time. We had to set up our own hardware boxes containing digital-audio interfaces, circuit boards, and processors, and then had to digitally connect a CD player into that box. The first time we transferred music, it took five signal processors. We would, of course, also test the format with certain songs to see if it accurately reproduced audio.

There's a difference between nice music (which we'd like to listen to) and critical music that is very hard to capture in high quality. We looked for tracks with castanets, triangle, soft voices, peace pipes, and things like that. We ended up using a Suzanne Vega acappella of "Tom's Diner" quite a bit.

What do you and the other scientists think about the continued popularity of the MP3?

It's a great experience to see that it's not just something people would use in a niche, professional market.

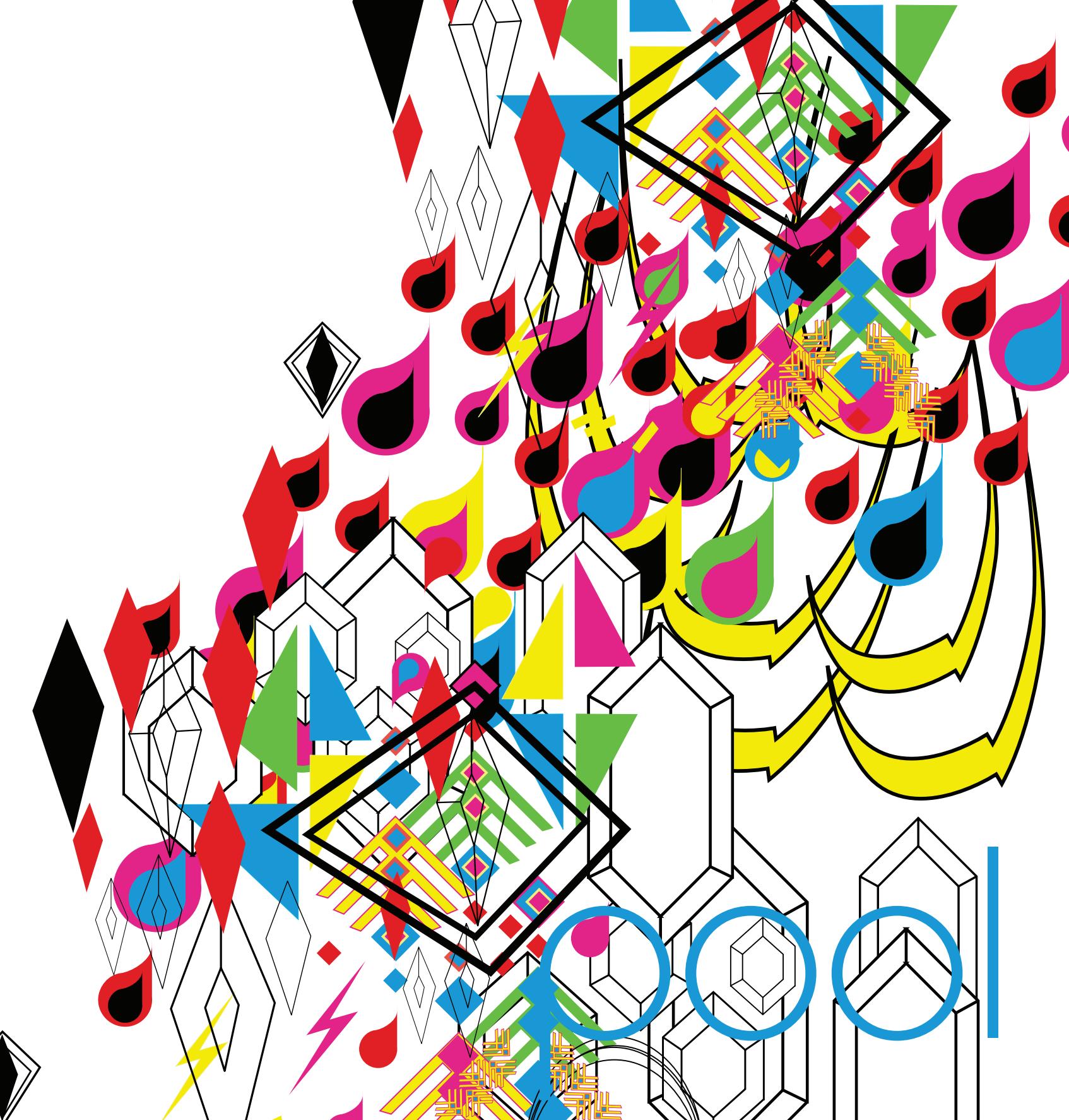
How do you feel about music piracy? We've never been supportive of music piracy. With the increasing popularity of MP3s, we've been investing quite a lot into projects to make digital music more secure. We've worked on one of the very first systems that can digitally encrypt and decrypt audio content for people who pay. We've done quite a bit more with digital-audio watermarks.

What new projects are you working on?

A team here is working on an interactive audio format. The listener would be able to manipulate different instruments [within a song]. You could boost the bass drum or maybe cover the voice to do karaoke. It gives the user a chance to make a favorite mix and reposition things.

www.iis.fraunhofer.de

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